



UNCLE ABE

PS 635
29/148

COMEDY IN 3 ACTS

Translated and adapted from the German

BY

AD. NEUENDORFF

NEW YORK

SIGISMUND VOYTITS, Book and Job Printer, 94 Fulton Street

1877

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ :

RICHARD CHASE, Cotton Merchant, a Widower.

FREDERICK (26 years),
PAULINE (19 years),
WILLIAM (16 years),

} his children.

ABRAHAM GRANGER, an old relation of the deceased Mrs.
CHASE.

CHARLES RIVERS, a young Merchant.

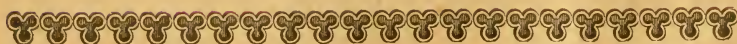
ELLEN NORWOOD (25 years), Housekeeper of Mr. CHASE.

JOHN, Servant.

SCENE :—A summer residence in the vicinity of New York.



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FIRST ACT.

An elegant room, appropriately furnished. One door R. and L., also one C. in the background.

FIRST SCENE.

ELLEN sits R., near a table. An embroidery lies near her, on the table. She unwinds a skein of red worsted which WILLIAM holds out to her, standing in front of her.

Ellen.—We better stop now, as you seem to get tired holding up your hands for such a long while.

William.—Tired? me? How can you think that anything could tire me which I do for you? I am ready to do anything you may ask of me. (*Emphatically*) Anything whatever.

Ellen (*toughly*).—Anything whatever?

William (*in the same tone*).—You don't believe me? Oh, how I wish a fire would break out in this house to-night--

Ellen. Nonsense!

William.—The flames ascend to heaven—the beams are in fire—the walls crack—you appear at the window of your room up stairs, crying for help, not knowing what to do in your anguish—the stairs are burning—every way of rescue is cut off—nobody dares to go into the house as it may crush him and you under its ruins at every moment—you are lost!

Ellen.—Stop, stop! the very thought of such an occurrence frightens me!--

William.—But no, I am there!--I rush into the flames, hurry up stairs, take you in my arms, and carry you out of the burning building—you are saved! (*Has unknowingly come nearer and nearer to Ellen, and is about to grasp her hand as if he was in reality trying to do of what he spoke.*)

Ellen (*taking him by both hands, shoves him back to where he stood before; puts his hands in the right position again, and goes on winding the worsted*).—Keep cool, young man, or we will have a big muss.

William.—Or, if you would fall in the water—Oh, I can swim!--how gladly would I jump after you—catch hold of you, and—

Ellen.—You better catch a hold of the worsted in the right way first, because if you go on this way we will never get through with it. (*Laughing*) It is a curious desire of yours to murder me either by fire or water, I declare.

William.—What, murder you! oh, no, on the contrary, save you from some frightful danger—defend you against robbers—rescue you from runaway

horses—or protect you against a mad dog. Oh, I always, at day as well as at night, think and dream of it, in which way I could prove to you how much I—

Ellen (*Interrupting him, and taking the worsted away from him, in a very serious tone*).—That will do, sir! It seems to me that you have become somewhat too large to be considered a child yet

William (*provoked*).—A child? I'm no child any more!

Ellen (*laughing*).—Being fourteen years already!

William.—I beg your pardon; sixteen!

Ellen.—So much the worse! That makes it at all imprudent for me to fool and joke with you any more.

William (*dejectedly*).—Really? Then please consider me a child yet, and keep on being friendly and pleasant to me.

Ellen (*changing tone*).—Do you read novels?

William.—Yes; why?

Ellen.—Because you seem to have acquired a great deal from them.

William.—Indeed I have, as I think a person ought to learn from whatever he reads.

Ellen.—From the contents of dime novels also?

William.—Yes, even from them. Oh, Ellen, if you knew how I—

Ellen (*interrupting him, very decidedly*).—I must most urgently request you, sir, not to talk to me any more in such a familiar tone, and hope you will perceive that while I call you *sir*, you have to address me *Miss Ellen*.

William (*frightened*).—Are you angry at me?

Ellen.—You must not forget, sir, that as your mother is dead I partly have to act as her substitute towards you. What would your father say if he would hear that you talk to me in such a familiar manner?

William.—Oh, I'm sure you'll not tell him about it.

Ellen.—Or old uncle Abe?

William.—Never mind him.

Ellen.—Tell me, how is he related to your family? I'm only four weeks in this house, and am not quite informed about all family matters yet.

William.—He is a distant relation of my deceased mother, I guess, and lives in our family very long already. My mother always used to call him uncle Abe, and that name stuck to him since then.

Ellen.—He seems to be a very good man.

William (*laughingly*).—The best and most good-natured old man you could find. He'll do anything for a person he likes. Formerly he used to be kind of superintendent of Pa's office, but since he has grown rather too old for actual business, and especially since my mother's death, he acts in about the same position in this house. Pa doesn't bother himself about anything but his business. Uncle Abe attends to everything in the house, is boss of the kitchen, cellar and garden; keeps the daily expense-books, pays all bills, receives the visitors if Pa isn't home—in one word, he is a splendid old man.

Everybody in the house likes him, and comes to him if there is anything to be arranged or adjudicated, and especially if there is any interposition necessary between Pa and me, on account of any foolish trick of mine, he is sure to do the work, and, generally, always succeeds in it. (*Changing his tone*) You'll not need any interposer in this house, as your loveliness and grace even imposes my stern and serene father.

Ellen (*very earnestly*).—Sir, I have told you already that—

William (*fervently*).—Please don't be so harsh to me. Oh, if you knew what I feel for you, Miss Ellen! How I think of you night and day! How little I care for anything or anybody else since I have seen you.—How my heart beats with joy when you are near and speak a friendly word to me.—The voice of the nightingale and the language of flowers are not fervent enough to express to you my—

Ellen (*harshly*).—Stop, sir; this is enough of your nonsense, which, by the way, reminds me that I find a fresh bouquet of flowers in my room every morning without knowing who put them there. I'll not hope that it is you who, perpetrates this folly. Your father, as well as uncle Abe, have been lately talking very seriously of the plundering of the garden, and are most anxious to find out who commits that mischief.

William.—But, Miss Ellen!

Ellen.—So you are the plunderer!

William (*imploringly*).—Please don't betray me.

Ellen.—You are doing very wrong to expose yourself to the anger of your father in such a way, besides putting me in a very queer position. What would your father say if he would find out that the flowers are in my room?

William (*downheartedly*).—I didn't think of that.

Ellen.—You ought to be more careful about what you do, so as not to compromise other people by your foolish pranks.

William.—Forgive me.

Ellen.—If you promise—

SECOND SCENE.

ELLEN, WILLIAM. *Enter MR. CHASE, FREDERIC, PAULINE and UNCLE ABE, from C. MR. CHASE opens the door, overhears the last words of the preceding conversation, and then comes forward. FREDERIC and UNCLE ABE stay in the background, talking very busily with each other. PAULINE comes slowly forward.*

Mr. Chase (*speaking in a friendly tone to Ellen, and in a harsh tone to William*).—He must promise everything you ask of him.

Ellen.—Mr. Chase!

Mr. Chase.—Did you have to reprimand him again?

Ellen.—Not exactly, but—

WILLIAM looks imploringly towards her.

Mr. Chase.—I suppose he has committed some foolish prank again, eh?

Ellen.—Oh! no, no. Your son only asked my advice in respect to what he should read, and I told him to avoid the works of certain authors.

Pauline (*haughtily, in a mocking tone*).—Miss Ellen seems to be well versed in literature.

Mr. Chase.—To be sure she is! Miss Ellen is a well educated young lady, from whom a young girl like you can learn, at all events.

Ellen (*imploringly*).—Mr. Chase!

Pauline (*snappishly*).—Really? Why, I guess I ought to go to school, at my age, yet.

Mr. Chase (*harshly*).—Age!—what age? Nonsense! You are nothing but a child, a young—well, never mind about that.

Ellen.—May be Miss Pauline thinks it improper to learn from me, on account of my being only a servant in the house.

Pauline (*in the same tone as before*).—Which is somewhat nearer to the point.

Mr. Chase.—And which deserves a severe reprimand. I don't want you, as well as everybody else in this house, to behave towards Miss Ellen as towards a servant. She is to be considered a member of our family, and dealt with accordingly.

Ellen.—But, Mr. Chase—

Mr. Chase.—In which behavior towards you everybody has to concur, Pauline as well as anybody else. (*To William.*) Go to your room now, sir, and in the future behave yourself in accordance with what I said just now.

William.—Yes, father. (*Exit C.*)

Mr. Chase (*to Pauline*).—And I wish you to go with Miss Ellen and finish your work of taking a household inventory, so that Miss Ellen can take charge of the whole and find out what is needed for the future.

Pauline.—That is what I came here to call Miss Ellen for.

Mr. Chase.—Well, then, go.

Ellen (*in a kind tone, to Pauline*).—I am at your disposal, Miss Pauline.

Pauline.—Come, then. (*Both exit, R.*)

Mr. Chase.—Frederic, go to my room, and wait there for me. I have only a few words to say to Uncle Abe before we go. (*Goes to the table L., and takes up a newspaper.*)

Frederic (*who has overcoat and hat on, and a small traveling valise in his hand*).—Very well, father. (*In an undertone to Uncle Abe.*) I wish to speak to you yet, before I leave. Please don't go out. (*Exit L.*)

THIRD SCENE.

MR CHASE. UNCLE ABE.

Uncle Abe (*an old, gray-haired, good-natured, careful, but still active man, fond of a pinch of snuff, comes forward*).—Well, Mr. Chase, what is it you want of me?

Mr. Chase (*putting down the newspaper*).—I wish to make you acquainted with several arrangements I have made lately, and, furthermore, with a secret business transaction in which I want your coöperation.

Uncle Abe.—Secret business transaction? Arrangements relating to the household, eh?

Mr. Chase.—My cotton mill in Connecticut wants more attention than it lately has had: Mr Williams, the foreman, is a very reliable man; but things have happened there lately which prove that it wants, if possible, a man who is personally interested in the welfare of my business to superintend the whole. For that reason, I have made up my mind to send Frederic there to-day, and put the mill in his charge as superintendent.

Uncle Abe.—Frederic? H'm, h'm, h'm!

Mr. Chase.—I don't think I can send a better man than my own son, who will most assuredly give his whole attention to the business, acting in some respects for himself as well as for me.

Uncle Abe.—Certainly, certainly; but—

Mr. Chase.—Well?

Uncle Abe.—Poor Fred is back from his business tour through the States only a few weeks—just begins to feel himself at home again—and now you want him to go out there to that lonesome country place and superintend the workmen of that cotton-mill of yours. Don't you think that's rather hard on him, considering that he is a young fellow and wants to enjoy his youth?

Mr. Chase.—Youth is the time for work, old age the time to enjoy life.

Uncle Abe.—I don't think he'd like the idea of going to that lonesome place very much.

Mr. Chase.—Which is all the same to me—he will go there, and that's the end of it. You know I don't allow anybody to contradict me, and most especially not my children. He can leave by the next train in an hour from now. I'll give him permission to come here on a visit every fortnight, which I think is sufficient recreation for him. I had to work harder than he in my youth, and was a poor devil, at that. Everything I call my own now I have to thank myself for, and my perseverance.

Uncle Abe.—Yes, yes, that's true.

Mr. Chase.—Fred's room will not be occupied till I give you further notice about it.

Uncle Abe.—All right.

Mr. Chase.—The next thing I wanted to talk to you about is, that I'm very much annoyed by the perpetual plundering of our garden. Have you no idea who is that flower-thief.

Uncle Abe.—No, not the slightest.

Mr. Chase.—I declare that is very strange, as you occupy the room in the rear part of the house fronting the garden. The theft is committed right under your window, one might say under your eye, which easily leads to the belief that you could detect and catch the thief.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—I? see and catch the thief, with my eyes and my legs? I guess you are joking Mr. Chase.

Mr. Chase.—Consequently I think it's better if we lock the gate of the garden fence at eight o'clock every evening, and let nobody in anymore after that without your or my permission. —Please to inform the gardener about it.

Uncle Abe.—All right, sir.

Mr. Chase.—And now let me tell you the most important. There is a big lot of cotton in Baltimore which, as I heard, can be bought very cheap, because the owners of it are very much in want of money to meet various obligations. On account of the probable bad cotton crop which we will have this year, cotton must go up considerably in price, as well here as in Boston, and a fine profit can be made if I hold sufficient stock at that time.—Consequently I have sent my agent, Mr. Boyd, to Baltimore to buy up that lot of cotton there for me.—If he attends to his business properly, I will be in possession of it before anybody gets wind of the whole affair, and by that operation can control the market here as well as in Boston. Boyd telegraphed that he'll be back here to-day, I have instructed him not to come to my office to avoid suspicion, but to come here, *give you* a letter containing all the particulars of his mission, for me, and then proceed directly by the next train to Boston, to arrange that part of the business with our house there. The letter Mr. Boyd will give you for me is without an address, so as to avoid it being opened in case it should by any accidents come into wrong hands.—As soon as Mr. Boyd has arrived, you will please send for me and be sure not to give the letter to anybody else but to me.—You must be quick, careful and discreet about the whole affair, as nobody but Boyd, you and me know about it and an indiscretion could spoil the whole business.

Uncle Abe.—You can rely on me.

Mr. Chase.—All right then. That was all I wanted to tell you.—I'll now go and give Fred the necessary instructions for his new position and then ride down to my office.

(*Exit L.*)

Uncle Abe (*escorting him to the door*).—Everything will be attended to properly, you may rest assured. (*Coming forward again.*) He counts and figures and plans, all the time, to increase his already large fortune, every day! He ought to be content with what he calls his own already. Well, well, people with such a disposition must exist also, because, if everybody was possessed of such contentedness as me, nothing great would be done in the world. Poor Fred! how lonesome he'll feel in that nasty, old, out-of-the-way cotton-mill place. Mr. Chase says: "Youth is the time for work, and old age the time to enjoy life." H'm! that's all very well, but the trouble is that nowadays youth wants to enjoy life so much, that hardly nothing is left for old age.

FOURTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE, WILLIAM (*through C.*)

William (*looking through the door*).—Are you alone, Uncle Abe?

Uncle Abe.—Yes, you little rascal. What do you want?

William (*in a dejected tone, while entering*).—Dear, dear Uncle-Abe.

Uncle Abe.—Well, what's the matter?

William (*petting him*).—You must help me out of the scrape.

Uncle Abe.—What is it, then?

William (*anxiously*).—I have to stay in school for three successive days.

Uncle Abe.—Really! On account of some mischievous prank again, I suppose?

William.—On account of a mere nothing. The thing is, I would like you to arrange matters here in the house in such a way that pa doesn't get wind of the affair. You know he is very cross with me on such occasions, and promised to punish me severely the last time I had to stay in school.

Uncle Abe.—Yes, Yes! the worst is that he'll miss you at dinner table.

William.—Oh, you can say, I am invited to some other house for dinner, or that you have sent me out to get something. Please, dear uncle Abe, find out something to keep the matter down.

Uncle Abe.—But tell me, Billy, when will you begin to behave yourself properly?

William.—Now, don't scold, will you? but help me through only this time.

Uncle Abe.—What is it you have done, then?

William.—As I said before already, a mere nothing. Our professor of Latin found out that, during the lesson, I had a novel under my bench, in which I read instead of reading in my Latin grammar.

Uncle Abe.—And which is very wrong indeed; especially as it was a novel you read. How often didn't I tell you not to do that!—You are too young for such books.

William (*pathetically*).—Oh, I know that you old people always insist upon the education of our minds, but forget that our young hearts also demand their share!

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—The heart! What do you know of the heart?

William.—Oho! You always talk as if I was a child yet, and forget that I am getting a moustache already. (*Putting uncle Abe's finger to his upper lip.*) Just feel!

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—Yes, yes. It is glorious, especially if you take a magnifying-glass to look at it. Heart! heart! such a boy talk about his heart! Ha, ha, ha!

William.—Yes, and with a perfect right, as the sweet secret has also crept into it already.

Uncle Abe (*still laughingly*).—The sweet secret!

William (*offended*).—You don't believe me? Oh, if you knew, uncle—

Uncle Abe (*serious*).—If I knew? Now, look here, young man, don't you talk any nonsense.

William. Nonsense, you say? What an expression for my—

Uncle Abe (*interrupting him*).—Yes, nonsense. Those novels have put all that stuff in your head, I suppose?

William.—I don't think it's necessary to read novels to get the voice of one's heart to speak.

Uncle Abe (*astonished*).—Voice of the heart to speak! And so you mean to tell me that you are in love with somebody. And with whom, if you please?

William.—If you promise to keep the name to yourself, I will tell you.

Uncle Abe (*impatient*).—Yes, yes. But who is it?

William (*as if whispering in his ear*).—Miss Ellen.

Uncle Abe (*astonished*).—Are you crazy?

William (*pathetically*).—Who can command his heart? She is so amiable, so lovely! her dear blue eyes are my heaven! her voice is music to me! she has captured my heart and soul—

Uncle Abe (*stopping William's mouth with his hand, laughingly*).—Stop, stop. That's sufficient for one girl. And what does Miss Ellen say?

William.—How?

Uncle Abe.—Does she return your love?

William.—What do you think, uncle Abe? How could I talk to her about my love? No, no! it's sufficient for me to adore her, and to fulfil, if possible, every wish of hers which I fancy I read in her eyes. Oh, if I could only pave her path of life with roses! if I—

Uncle Abe (*as if suddenly struck by a thought, catching him by the ear*).—You rascal, you, have I got you now?

William.—Oh, oh! please let go my ear!

Uncle Abe.—No, sir, nothing of the kind. So it's you that stole all those flowers in the garden?

William (*trying to stop Uncle Abe's mouth with his hand*).—Don't scream like that; somebody might hear us.

Uncle Abe (*letting him go, and looking around, in a cautious tone*).—Nobody else but you is the thief.

William.—But, uncle Abe, I assure you—

Uncle Abe.—Nonsense, nonsense! I'm not going to be fooled by you any more. For this time I'll keep quiet about the whole thing yet, but if another rose is plucked off again without my knowledge, I'll denounce you to your father.

William.—Dear uncle Abe, please don't!

Uncle Abe.—And, besides that, it would be better for you to stick to your schoolbooks and not bore your head with novels.

William.—That's the way you old folks are. As soon as the blood begins to run slower through the veins, you have forgotten that there was a time when it pulsed in your bodies like in ours, and commence to growl and scold about the feelings of our young hearts. (*Light*) But you are almost entirely an ex-

ception to this rule, dear uncle Abe, and will surely see me all right with pa on account of my having to stay in school for three days. (*Tragic*) But she! Oh! it is fearful that I'll not see her at the dinner table for those three days! Oh! that's worse than hunger! Her picture is engraved in my heart though—I will think of her, and be happy. (*Light*) And about the flowers—I hope that I can rely on you that it will be kept secret between us two. You see, pa has got his head full enough with his business, and doesn't need to be bothered with such nonsense. (*Serious*) But above all, remember that you have decoyed me into betraying to you my secret—from your noble heart I expect silence about it; silence to everybody, even to her, my dearest angel! (*Light, giving Uncle Abe a kiss*) And now, dear uncle Abe, good-bye. Remember, you pledged yourself to silence—I have your word, and rely on it. Good-bye! Good-bye! (*Exit, running off L.*)

Uncle Abe.—Here, here, stop, you little rascal. (*Looking after him.*) Fine boy that, full of fire and life (*laughingly*). And in love, too (*dolefully*)! Yes, yes; it is a blissful time when the heart begins to feel the first emotions. Billy is too young for that though, at all events, and nothing but misfortune can arise from such nonsense—but no! Miss Ellen is an honest girl, and will take good care that Billy is kept from mischief. At all events, I'll keep my eye on the boy.

FIFTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE. PAULINE *from R.*

Pauline (*looking through the door*).—Uncle Abe!

Uncle Abe (*turning around*).—Eh?

Pauline. Pst!

Uncle Abe.—Well?

Pauline.—Is Pa in his room yet?

Uncle Abe.—Yes.

Pauline (*coming out*).—Let us be careful then.

Uncle Abe.—Very well; but what is the matter?

Pauline.—I want to make you my confidant.

Uncle Abe (*inquisitively*).—Your confidant?

PAULINE *nods.*

Uncle Abe.—Well, then, go ahead and let me hear your secret.

Pauline (*ashamed*).—Oh, I couldn't tell you.

Uncle Abe.—How?

Pauline.—Must I say what it is?

Uncle Abe.—Certainly! How else could you make me your confidant?

Pauline.—But didn't you notice yet what is the matter?

Uncle Abe.—Notice? What?

Pauline (*sighing*).—Ah!

Uncle Abe (*imitating her*).—Ah!—What do you mean by ah? I don't understand you.

Pauline.—Well, then, if it must be, I'll tell you. But you must turn around (*turns him around*) and not look at me. (*Whispering in his ear*) I'm in love.

Uncle Abe (*bursting out in a loud laugh*).—In love?

Pauline (*shutting his mouth with her hand*).—Please don't scream as loud as that, somebody might hear us.

Uncle Abe (*astonished*).—In love?

Pauline.—Yes, in love.

Uncle Abe (*chuckling*).—Well, well, I declare. But let me examine you once how you look when you are in love!

Pauline.—Oh, how naughty you are, uncle Abe.

Uncle Abe (*good-naturedly*).—Never mind that, my dear; but tell me who is your sweetheart?

Pauline.—Who? I thought you had noticed that already.

Uncle Abe (*simply*).—No, I didn't notice anything.

Pauline (*whispering in his ear*).—It's Charles.

Uncle Abe.—Charles who?

Pauline (*impatiently*).—Rivers!

Uncle Abe.—Rivers? Is his name Charles?

Pauline.—Yes.

Uncle Abe.—I didn't know that! Well, well, you are right, I could have noticed that, the more so as he is a fine good-looking fellow. But tell me, how is it that he shows so many courtesies to Miss Ellen?

Pauline.—Oh, that's only a trick.

Uncle Abe.—A trick?

Pauline.—Yes. You see, we know each other six weeks, and since three weeks he has declared his love to me. Mr. Rivers is a young merchant who does a fair business, but for the reason that Pa, as you know, is very proud of his riches, which he has accumulated by his own labor and perseverance, we never had the courage to confess our love to him, as Mr. Rivers' business was not so extremely lucrative yet. Once I undertook to find out Pa's idea about my marriage, and saw that my fear was entirely justified. He said his son-in-law must, at all events, be in the same financial position as he, and that he would never give his consent to a marriage if the young man wasn't backed up by sufficient means.

Uncle Abe.—Oh, yes; I know his ideas about that point.

Pauline.—And now what shall we do? Hope, and wait?

Uncle Abe.—A very hard task for a young loving couple.

Pauline.—Isn't it? But you must help us, dear good uncle Abe.

Uncle Abe.—I? How can I?—if I only had money enough—

Pauline.—No, no ; not so ! You must try to bring Pa around to our wishes. You must, now and then, drop a word about Charles ; tell Pa what a nice and good young fellow Charley is—he really is a good young fellow. I assure you.

Uncle Abe.—Indeed ?

Pauline.—Yes. That is, in one point, I don't know exactly if I can trust him.

Uncle Abe.—How is that ?

Pauline.—You shall know everything. Pa could have easily got suspicious if Charley would have come so very often after I had tried to find out pa's ideas about my marriage, and so we agreed that, to avoid such suspicion, he should try to make believe that he was courting Ellen.

Uncle Abe.—Aha !

Pauline.—But sometimes it seems to me as if—

Uncle Abe (*mockingly interrupting her*).—Charles' "make believe" was too natural.

Pauline.—Just so !

Uncle Abe.—And that his love-making to Ellen was in earnest ?

Pauline (*hastily*).—Which you have observed, eh ? Oh, how right I was in my suppositions !

Uncle Abe.—And so you are jealous of Miss Ellen ?

Pauline (*haughtily*). Jealous of Miss Ellen ? oh, no ! But she seems to be very coquettish—and who knows if she doesn't try to entangle Charley into her net.

Uncle Abe (*doubtfully*).—Miss Ellen coquettish ? Nonsense !

Pauline (*angrily*).—Yes, she is so ! It seems very funny to me that you also try to defend her, like pa, who seems to be quite charmed with her.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—Yes, yes, she has charmed the whole male portion of the house.

Pauline.—And I think it's very naughty of you to laugh and joke while I come here to ask your advice and help.

Uncle Abe.—But what shall I do for you my dear child ?

Pauline.—Help me, and give me advice to get out of my trouble. Observe Ellen, and tell me if you think she is acting wrong ; and if pa begins to get suspicious, try to dispel his suspicions, and, above all, if Charley and I want to see each other alone once—

Uncle Abe.—I shall try and arrange an interview, eh ?

Pauline.—Yes, dear uncle Abe.

Uncle Abe.—No, child ; my conscience wouldn't permit me to do any such thing.

Pauline.—Which is very wrong ; because if you feel the least interest in mine and Charley's welfare, you ought to do everything to help us along. Pa's opposition is only based on prejudice, and prejudices must not be tolerated.

Uncle Abe.—Oh, you little witch, how nice she knows how to put her cause in the right light.

Pauline (*coaxingly*)—Now, please, dear uncle Abe, tell me if I have done wrong to intrust my secret to you, and if you'll help me along?

Uncle Abe.—Hush, my dear; I hear your father coming.

Pauline.—Quick, uncle Abe, give me your hand and word that you'll help us

Uncle Abe.—Well, I'll consider the matter.

Pauline.—No, no, I want your hand! You promise silence and help?

Uncle Abe.—All right, then; here it is.

Pauline.—Oh, now everything is all right (*kisses him, and exit C*).

Uncle Abe.—Hm, hm—Charles Rivers—Everybody talks well of him.—And then she is right when she says that her father is full of prejudices.—Well, I'll see what I can do.

SIXTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE. *Enter MR. CHASE (from L).*

Mr. Chase (*with hat and cane, talking back into the room from where he comes*).—Good by, my boy. Take good care of yourself (*advancing as if to leave the room through C*). (*To uncle Abe*) Fred is packing his trunk, and will depart in a short time.

Uncle Abe.—Very well.

Mr. Chase.—And what I told you before—

Uncle Abe.—Will be attended to.

Mr. Chase (*while walking to the door, turns and comes back to uncle Abe—in a pleasant tone*).—Uncle Abe, I have to confide something else to you yet.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—So? Well, go ahead, as I'm in it once.

Mr. Chase.—In what?

Uncle Abe.—In the confidence.

Mr. Chase.—How so?

Uncle Abe (*noticing that he has said rather too much*).—H'm! I mean that you have told me several other confidential things already.

Mr. Chase.—Ah! yes. (*Playing with his cane. In an embarrassed tone*). Tell me, how do you like our new housekeeper?

Uncle Abe.—Miss Ellen?

Mr. Chase.—Yes.

Uncle Abe.—Well, I think she is pretty good-looking.

Mr. Chase.—Only good-looking! I think she is beautiful.

Uncle Abe.—Indeed?

Mr. Chase.—Did you notice that beautiful foot of hers?—the delicate hand?—her graceful bearing?—that splendid eye?

Uncle Abe (*astonished*).—But, Mr. Chase—

Mr. Chase.—Oh! I know what you want to say! Although I'm not a young man any more, I take a great interest in her and her welfare. She is the perfection of woman, in my eyes.

Uncle Abe (*bursting out in a laughing tone*).—Well, I declare! Father and son! (*Shuts his mouth with his hand, as if it suddenly strikes him that he has betrayed himself.*)

Mr. Chase (*catching his arm. In a very hasty and whispering tone*).—So you have noticed, also?

Uncle Abe (*embarrassed*).—What? I haven't noticed anything.

Mr. Chase.—That Fred always looks at her in a very suspicious manner.

Uncle Abe (*astonished*).—Frederic! (*Aside*) What does he mean by that?

Mr. Chase.—Yes, Frederic! Oh! I have good eyes, and see everything. I have noticed a long time already that an intimacy is growing up between him and Ellen, and that's the reason I send him to the cotton mill.

Uncle Abe.—Aha! that's what's the matter?

Mr. Chase (*embarrassed because he has betrayed himself*).—Not exactly that alone; but still it is one reason for it.

Uncle Abe.—In other words, you wanted to get rid of a rival.

Mr. Chase.—A rival! Nonsense! I don't think it has come to that point yet. But still—

Uncle Abe (*cunningly*).—Well?

Mr. Chase.—Well, I haven't come to any positive determination yet. But tell me—do you think that (as I'm only fifty years old and quite lively and healthy yet) anybody could blame me for it if I would try to create me a new home and enjoy my life?

Uncle Abe (*consenting*).—Certainly not.

Mr. Chase.—And as single life can impossible be made comfortable—

Uncle Abe.—That's so.

Mr. Chase.—I think nobody could blame me if I would marry again according to my choice.

Uncle Abe.—To be sure.

Mr. Chase.—I am rich; don't need to bother myself about what the world says—

Uncle Abe.—Exactly; and consequently will try to make Miss Ellen my new wife.

Mr. Chase.—Nothing definite yet; I only thought of it. But still it isn't at all impossible, although I haven't come to any definite conclusion yet.

Uncle Abe.—Oh! I know enough already.

Mr. Chase (*patting his cheek jocosely*).—You know nothing at all, uncle Abe; nothing at all—do you hear? All I would like to ask of you would be to watch Miss Ellen a little, to try and find out how she thinks of me, and, above all,

find out something about her former life. She is so very reticent, nobody knows the least of it; and I assure you that if she hadn't been so well recommended to me—

Uncle Abe.—You wouldn't have taken her in your house at all.

Mr. Chase.—But there is another thing that bothers me yet—this Mr. Rivers who visits our house so frequently since about four weeks, although I have nothing personal against him (as he is a clever and smart business man), is disagreeable to me because he is so very courteous to Miss Ellen.

Uncle Abe (*cunningly*).—To Miss Ellen!

Mr. Chase (*astonished*).—Yes; why do you ask in such a tone?

Uncle Abe (*embarrassed*).—Because, I thought—

Mr. Chase.—That it might be my daughter who is meant? I would put a stop to that very quick.

Uncle Abe.—Oh! no, no! I have noticed also, that he pays a great deal of attention to Miss Ellen.

Mr. Chase.—Did you? Well, then, tell me what shall I do, as it is impossible for me to forbid his visits. Suppose you would put Miss Ellen on the right track by dropping a word now and then about me, and I think everything will be all right. I'm pretty sure I'll make up my mind to enslave myself once more.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—Yes, yes. It seems to me as if you were on the best way to accomplish that.

Mr. Chase.—Well, Uncle Abe, I rely on you. Watch Mr. Rivers, and try to find out Miss Ellen's ideas about me. But, above all, silence!

Uncle Abe.—Certainly, you can rely on me.

Mr. Chase (*shaking Uncle Abe's hand*).—If everything goes right, you can be assured of my gratitude. (*Exit C.*)

Uncle Abe (*humorously*).—I declare, that's a nice mess in this house!—the son in love, the daughter in love, the father in love! I wonder what Billy would say if his adored would become his stepmother? Well, a boy like that will get over such a disappointment very easy. It would certainly be a much more serious thing if Frederic—h'm! I think it very wrong, though, that Mr. Chase sends him to that dreary cotton-mill place, out of sheer jealousy. Yes, yes; against his children he is a tyrant, whose very hearts he tries to subdue and govern while he, himself, is an old, lovesick fool! He's right, though, in respect to Miss Ellen; I think she could even set my heart a-going once more if she—

SEVENTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE, FREDERIC, ELLEN. FREDERIC opens door L., and steps cut. ELLEN opens door R., remaining in it unseen to the others.

Uncle Abe (*as if interrupted by the noise*).—Who's there? (*Seeing Frederic*) Ready to leave, poor devil? I think you'll feel quite lonesome in that out-of-the-way place. Your father will call you back very soon, though, I guess.

Frederic.—Uncle Abe, I have to confide something to you yet before I leave.

Uncle Abe.—What, you also? It seems to me as if the whole world is going to make me its confidant. (*Taking hold of his arm.*) Tell me, are you in love also?

Frederic.—More than that—I am married.

Uncle Abe (*frightened*).—Married! Good gracious! Married? Well, that's a nice mess.

Frederic.—Since three months already.

Uncle Abe (*in a lamentable tone*).—Since three months! And with whom, you villain?

Frederic (*goes to door R., and brings Ellen forward*).—With this lady.

Uncle Abe (*sinks into a chair*).—With Miss Ellen? I'm thunderstruck!

Frederic.—Come, dear Ellen; Uncle Abe will take care of you when I'm not here. He'll be your paternal friend.

Ellen (*advancing towards Uncle Abe in a timid manner*).—You are angry with me, and rightly so. I have done very wrong in marrying Frederic without the consent and against the will of his father.

Uncle Abe (*lamenting*).—Oh! what a fearful row there will be. Your father—

Frederic.—Will be reconciliated.

Uncle Abe (*as if not hearing Frederic*).—And William?

Frederic.—How?

Uncle Abe.—And Mr. Rivers?

Frederic (*impetuously*).—What about him?

Uncle Abe.—And Pauline? Oh! what a poor old man I am! I'll get crazy in this fearful mess.

Frederic.—What about Rivers and William? Tell me.

Uncle Abe.—How?

Frederic.—What do you mean by bringing Rivers and William in connection with my wife?

Uncle Abe (*trying to regain his composure*).—Oh! nothing, nothing—only let me recover a little; I'm quite crushed by this piece of news.

Frederic.—But I wish you would explain to me what worries you.

Uncle Abe.—That is impossible. I have promised silence.

Frederic.—Silence! about what?

Uncle Abe.—If I would tell you that, I would have broken my promise already. What do you ask of me in your matter?

Frederic.—Silence, above all.

Uncle Abe.—That's what all the others ask of me, also.

Frederic (*impatently*).—Which others? Tell me what is the matter with Rivers and my wife? That bothers me.

Uncle Abe.—Nothing, nothing, upon my word. Your wife, your wife! (*good-naturedly*.) How nice that sounds! Well, what has happened cannot be re-

called. Come here, my boy, shake hands with me. I have always thought with joy of that moment when you would bring a young wife in the house. What a fine time we'll have when the little ones—(*stepping between Frederic and Ellen, and raising Ellen's head by her chin.*) Now, don't get offended by what I say, my dear girl; such an old man like me is always entitled to a word more than other people. I must declare, Fred, that you have shown a first-class taste in your choice.

Ellen (*bashfully*).—But, Mr. Granger, please don't!

Uncle Abe.—Don't do what? That boy must understand what a treasure he has found in you. And, above all, I wish you wouldn't call me Mr. Granger—I am Uncle Abe for everybody in this house. Everybody calls me so, even the servants, and I don't see the reason why you should make an exception to this rule. But, my children, tell me, what will be the upshot of all this? If your father hears about your marriage, there will be a nice row.

Frederic.—I think it's best that father doesn't get acquainted with the facts at present yet; and, furthermore, everything depends upon your help, uncle Abe, as I have to leave for that confounded cotton-mill place immediately, which spoils all our plans for the future.

Uncle Abe.—Above all, though, tell me, first, how did the whole thing happen?

Frederic.—Oh! that's very plain. You know that, during the last two years, father sent me very often to Boston for the purpose of arranging some business matters there. During my occasional visits to Boston I got acquainted with Ellen there, fell in love with her, and, knowing that father would never consent to my marriage with a girl of moderate means, I persuaded Ellen to get married to me secretly.

Ellen.—And I was weak enough to consent. You are perfectly right in being angry with me about what I done, Mr.—

Uncle Abe (*interrupting her*).—Uncle Abe, child, that's my name. Be angry with you!—I, with you, my dear (*patting her on the cheek*)—No, no! Don't you know that it goes against my nature to be angry at all?

Frederic.—We were just married two months when father called me back to New York again. Almost at the same time Ellen's mother died, her father having died already about five years ago. What should we do? I didn't know any family in Boston with whom I could leave my wife; and, furthermore, I couldn't leave her alone, on account of her mother's death, because I was her only support in her grief; consequently, I tried to bring her into our family as housekeeper, in which I succeeded, thereby attaining, first, to be near her all the time, and secondly, that she might, perhaps, gain the love and esteem of my father by her manners and behavior.

Uncle Abe (*bursting out*).—Oh, that she has done—that she has done!

Frederic and Ellen (*together, in a joyous tone*).—How? What do you say?

Uncle Abe (*embarrassed, as if avoiding to say the truth*).—That is—yes—he has spoken very highly of you, my dear—very highly.

Ellen (*joyously*).—Indeed? O, how glad I am.

Frederic.—And so am I, as that piece of news enlivens my hope considerably. But what shall be done next? I have to leave, and my wife remains here alone.

Uncle Abe.—Never mind; don't fear, my boy; I'll take good care of her.

Ellen.—You dear old uncle Abe!

Frederic.—Thanks, a thousand thanks

Uncle Abe (*who seems to be well pleased by Ellen's amiable attachment to him*).—And if Fred's father drops some very queer idea of his, I think I can arrange the whole matter satisfactorily. Now, go, my boy, and God bless you.

Frederic.—Thank you, uncle Abe; but let me tell you one thing more before I leave. Pa has allowed me to come here on a visit only every fortnight; now, I think that's rather a little too long for any man to be separated from his wife.

Uncle Abe (*innocently*).—Yes, yes; but what can we do?

Frederic. Well, I thought that your room, being in the rear part of the house, with a separate entrance from the garden, would be a splendid place for secret interviews with my wife.

Uncle Abe.—Oh, you rascal, you!

Frederic.—You know father goes to his club on two evenings of the week. On such days Ellen will send me a telegram, in the morning, at what time she wants to meet me in the evening, and, as a train leaves my place almost every hour, it is an easy thing for me to be here in time. She comes to your room, and I sneak into it through the gate in the rear of the garden, for which I have already had an extra key made. In this way I can see my wife without anybody seeing me or knowing of it.

Uncle Abe.—And I have to clear out of my room during these interviews, eh?

Frederic.—Of course, we don't want you there!

Uncle Abe (*goodnaturedly*).—A splendid idea, I declare.

Frederic.—And you consent to it?

Uncle Abe (*as if in earnest*).—What do you think, my boy! How can I? My duty against your father—my conscience—no, no, I can't do it!

Ellen.—Please, dear uncle Abe.

Uncle Abe.—Oh, you little witch, you!

Frederic.—You'll surely reward the confidence we put in you by helping us.

Uncle Abe.—Hm, hm—

Ellen.—And be as kind to us as to all others.

Uncle Abe.—Well, well, it's a hard thing to resist, if you beg as fervently as that.

Frederic (*extending his hand*).—So you permit us to come?

Uncle Abe.—What else can I do?

Frederic
Ellen { (*together*).—A thousand thanks, dear old uncle Abe.

Uncle Abe.—Dear old uncle Abe!—How they can coax and bring a person around to their wishes. But you must prove to me that you really are married.

Frederic.—And how?

Uncle Abe.—By giving your wife a good sound kiss.

Frederic (*going to Ellen. and kissing her*).—Certainly!

Uncle Abe (*wiping his mouth, as if jealous of the kiss Fred gave to Ellen*).—Old fool I was! I could have had the same thing if I had had courage enough in my youth to pop the question.

Frederic.—And now I go to my dreary cotton-mill place with a light heart.—Good by, uncle Abe! *au revoir* in your *sanctum sanctorum*. Ellen, give him a kiss of gratitude.

Ellen.—With all my heart! (*kisses uncle Abe.*)

Uncle Abe (*smiling*).—Ah!

Frederic.—And then come, its time for me to leave.

Frederic } (*together*).—Good by, uncle Abe (*both exit through C*).
Ellen }

Uncle Abe (*closing his eyes for a few seconds, as if in raptures about the kiss ELLEN gave him—joyously*).—By Jove! what a mouth! Like velvet! If her kiss tastes as good as that to an old man like me, how must it taste to her husband (*walking up and down excitedly*). Fine children they are, fine children indeed! He, a goodhearted and diligent boy, and she, a first-class house-keeping woman and educated lady. They match splendidly together. A fine couple they are, indeed. But the father, the father! Well, what will be the upshot of it after all? There will be a big row, but as he can't make things undone, he has to give in. And William? (*laughing*) and Rivers? and Pauline? and the flowers? (*getting more serious by degrees*) and the father? and Billy's troubles in school? and the jealousy? and the cotton? My God, they have packed me full of secrets which will surely crush me. Everybody is in love or jealous—and the innocent cause of all is Ellen! Oh, if I only don't betray me. I hope to God that there is nobody left in the house who has to confide a secret to me.

EIGHTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE. *Enter JOHN from C.*

John (*stopping in the middle of the stage*).—Uncle Abe!

Uncle Abe (*turns around suddenly, grasping JOHN by the collar—excitedly*).—Have you also got a secret to tell me, or are you in love, you villain?

John (*frightened*).—In love? yes.

Uncle Abe.—With whom? confess!

John.—With the chambermaid!

Uncle Abe (*letting go his grasp*).—Thanks to God!

John.—I came to tell you that the dinner is ready. sir (*exit*).

Uncle Abe.—I thought he wanted to tell me that he was in love with Ellen also! (*exit*.)

The curtain drops.

SECOND ACT.

GARDEN. (N.B. The whole depth of the stage.) In the background L. a house with steps.—A wall running across the stage in the last entrance encloses the garden. The background behind the wall represents a street.—In the wall opposite of the house R. a gate which leads to the street.—In the foreground L. a marble figure, enclosed by shrubbery and brushes.

FIRST SCENE.

MR. CHASE and UNCLE ABE (*coming from the house into the garden*).

Uncle Abe (*good natured*).—Good digestion demands a nice little walk in the garden after dinner, and that's what I am going to take now. You look as if in bad humor, Mr. Chase; wasn't you contented with our dinner?

Mr. Chase (*growling*).—No, not at all.

Uncle Abe.—I'm very sorry about that and will give the cook a good blow-up.

Mr. Chase.—Nonsense! It wasn't the cook's fault; the meals were all right. But did you notice that young rascal at the table?

Uncle Abe.—Who? Billy?

Mr. Chase.—Billy? No, Rivers I mean.

Uncle Abe. Yes, Yes.

Mr. Chase.—He only had eyes for Ellen; only conversed with her, and told her nothing but gallantries.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—For which he has his good reasons. (*Slaps his mouth.*) (*Aside.*) By Jove! I nearly betrayed myself.

Mr. Chase.—Well, yes. His reasons are that he is in love with Ellen, which thought nearly sets me crazy. The worst of it is, that courtesy and good tact demands of me to permit his visits at my house on account of his business connections with my firm. Uncle Abe, will you believe that—oh you'll say that I'm old fool—

Uncle Abe.—No; not at all.

Mr. Chase (*whispering in his ear*).—That I am jealous of this Mr. Rivers.

Uncle Abe (*bursting out laughing*).—Hahaha! I assure you that you don't need to be jealous of him! (*Slapping his mouth*) Confound it, what did I do?

Mr. Chase.—How so? How do you mean that?

Uncle Abe.—Well—I think—I mean—as far as I can see, that Miss Ellen doesn't favor him any.

Mr. Chase.—Indeed? Oh I'm very glad to hear that. But she seems to be so absent-minded, so changed, since the last four days, just about as long as Fred is gone to the cotton-mill.

Uncle Abe.—That's no wonder, considering (*slaps his mouth*)—

Mr. Chase.—Considering what?

Uncle Abe (*embarrassed*).—Well—I mean—considering that she has to attend to Frederic's clothing and wash which he wants to be sent there immediately, and which she has to put in order yet.

Mr. Chase.—May be you are right. (*Looking around. In an undertone.*) Listen to me, Uncle Abe. I've come to a conclusion about what I've told you a few days ago. You would oblige me very much if you could find out Miss Ellen's ideas about the matter, and if she is willing—all right then.

Uncle Abe.—You'll marry her!

Mr. Chase.—Don't scream like that; it isn't necessary that everybody hears what we are talking. Yes, if she consents, I'll marry her. In case you hear from her that she has no objections, please give her this letter (*giving uncle Abe a letter*), in which I ask her for an interview.

Uncle Abe (*taking the letter*).—All right.

Mr. Chase.—But be as discreet as possible about it.

Uncle Abe.—As discreet as possible.

Mr. Chase.—My destiny is in your hands, so act prudently. I guess the young ladies will come into the garden after dinner, when you'll easily find an opportunity to talk to her and give her the letter.

Uncle Abe.—You may rest assured that I'll try my best.

Mr. Chase.—Well, then, I'll go into the house. (*Goes, stops, and comes back to uncle Abe.*) Apropos, that plundering of our garden hasn't stopped yet; last night, some of our best roses were cut off again.

Uncle Abe (*bursting out*).—Oh, that little rascal!

Mr. Chase.—What?

Uncle Abe (*embarrassed*).—How?

Mr. Chase.—You said—?

Uncle Abe.—I?

Mr. Chase.—You said, "Oh, that little rascal!"

Uncle Abe.—Did I? that expression only escaped me.

Mr. Chase.—Uncle Abe, you know who the thief is and don't want to tell me.

Uncle Abe.—No; indeed not! I have only a slight suspicion.

Mr. Chase.—You know the thief, and are trying to get him out of the scrape?

Uncle Abe (*in great embarrassment*).—I assure you—

Mr. Chase.—What shall I think of all that? Besides, Billy wasn't at the dinner-table for three days, and says he had your permission to stay away—what does all that mean? You know that you have my entire confidence, and I hope not that you deceive me.

Uncle Abe.—But, Mr. Chase, how can you think—

SECOND SCENE.

UNCLE ABE. MR CHASE. *Enter WILLIAM, who comes out of the house and tries to run into the garden.*

Mr. Chase (*seeing him*).—Billy, come here!

William (*advancing towards Mr. Chase*).—Yes, father. What do you wish?

Mr. Chase.—I want to know why you wasn't at dinner the last three days.

William (*frightened*).—Uncle Abe—

Mr. Chase.—Knows why; all right! But wouldn't you tell me the reason, also?

William (*stammering*).—Yes, dear father—

Mr. Chase.—You hesitate? I want to know what is the matter. Uncle Abe must tell me all he knows about it.

Uncle Abe (*getting calmer*).—Well, yes, something is the matter; and, if you insist on knowing it, let me tell you that I have dictated him to stay away from dinner for three days, as a punishment.

Mr. Chase.—As a punishment! then there has been some serious complaint about him from his teacher again, I suppose, of which you didn't tell me. Now look here, my boy. I guess I'd better send you to a strict boarding school where they will learn you manners, as I see that you can't be managed at home.

William (*begging*).—Please, father, don't!

Uncle Abe (*angrily*).—No, no; his teacher didn't complain about him.

Mr. Chase.—Well, then, what is it? I want to know the truth—why you punished him.

Uncle Abe (*not knowing how to help himself*).—He has cut those flowers off.

Mr. Chase.—Billy?

William (*reproachfully*).—Uncle Abe!

Uncle Abe. I caught him, and, not wanting to trouble you with it, I punished him out of my own accord. That's the whole thing.

Mr. Chase.—So you are the flower thief?

Uncle Abe.—Let him alone now; he received his punishment for it, and that ends the matter.

Mr. Chase.—All right; but look out that you are not caught again. (*Taking uncle Abe aside.*) Don't forget what you've promised me. (*Exit R.*)

Uncle Abe (*wiping the sweat from his brow*).—I declare, that was a tight fix!

William.—It's a shame, uncle Abe, that you promised silence to me, and now betray me. Pshaw! I never thought that you could act as mean as that.

Uncle Abe.—Are you not ashamed of yourself, to talk to me in that way? How could I help myself, when your father drove me into such a tight corner? And furthermore, I'm so full of secrets as a tree full of caterpillars; (*pointing to his head*) one crawls here, and one crawls there, and how easy isn't it that one crawls out.—But tell me, didn't you take flowers again last night?

William.—No, to be sure not.

Uncle Abe.—P'st! don't lie. I'm convinced that it was you who cut those flowers, of which your father spoke before. For this time you are out of the scrape, but you may be assured that I'll not help you out again the next time.

William (*coaxingly*).—Tell me uncle Abe, about what other secrets did you talk before?

Uncle Abe.—That's none of your business, sir. (*Aside*) I guess I better get out of the way of the others by taking a little walk, else I might get confused entirely and betray one to the other, and, by that, create a great deal of mischief. It seems to me as if I've said too much already. (*Exit L.*)

William. So I am detected, and Ellen should have no flowers any more? Pshaw, that would be a poor knight who fears danger. They lock the garden in the evening now—all right; I'll climb over the fence; which is better still, as nobody can prove then, that it was I who took the flowers—Oh, it is glorious to risk everything for one's beloved!—If I only knew how I could play that confounded Rivers a trick—he is always flirting with Ellen, and looks at her with eyes—oh, such eyes!—I'll blacken them for him, some day, you bet!

(*Exit R.*)

THIRD SCENE.

Enter RIVERS, who comes from the house, goes to the arbor, and sits down in it; reading the following from a paper which he takes from his pocketbook while entering.

Do I really dare to hope,
And believe thy eyes, which say
That thy love belongs to me?
Has thy false heart understood
To betray me, in those days
When I vowed to love but thee?

No; in your pure features are
Truth—yes, truth, alone expressed,
And your love belongs to me!
While I, as my throbbing heart
Sets all jealous doubts at rest,
Vow again to love but thee!

(*Puts the paper back in his pocketbook, which he lays on the table, leaving it there when he goes off afterwards*).—Anyhow, these verses are not so bad for a person that is no professional poet, though I had to rack my brain pretty hard to make them. But Pauline loves poetry, and especially about herself; so I made them willingly, and to my best ability.—If I only knew where she is? She was going to write something, and then come down, as it is easier to have an unobserved little chat in the garden than in the house.—The position which I occupy in this family begins, by degrees, to get unbearable. To deceive the father, I have to flirt with the housekeeper, and am watched by Pauline with the most jealous eyes, who, in her jealousy, always reproaches me about my

behavior, although she has concocted the whole plan. A nice situation it is, I declare. And, above all, I'm acting very wrong against Miss Ellen; that poor girl may be deceived by my behavior, and may put ideas in her head which can never be realized.

FOURTH SCENE.

RIVERS. *Enter ELLEN, from the house, having a needlework in her hand. Looks around, as if to convince herself that nobody is near, and then goes to the arbour. Does not perceive RIVERS before she enters the arbour.*

Ellen (*embarrassed*).—Ah, Mr. Rivers!

Rivers (*surprised*).—Miss Ellen! and working again? You really are too industrious.

Ellen.—You, most probably, were trying to have your little nap after dinner in this shady place, and I have disturbed you?

Rivers.—No, not at all! How can a person think of sleeping in a house where such amiable company—

Ellen.—I beg your pardon, Mr. Rivers—for asking you to address these courtesies to that person which is more entitled to them than I.

FIFTH SCENE.

RIVERS. ELLEN. *Enter PAULINE, who comes from the house, sees RIVERS and ELLEN, and hides herself behind the marble figure so as to overhear what they say.*

Rivers.—Who do you mean?

Ellen.—Do you really believe that you can deceive me by your behavior?

Rivers.—Deceive you?

Ellen.—Yes; as I know very well on account of whom you pay your visits to this house.

Rivers (*embarrassed*).—Miss Ellen—

Ellen (*laughingly*).—You are perplexed? Well, a little lesson can't hurt you, because you have rated my female shrewdness too low.

Rivers.—I assure you—

Ellen.—Don't you assure me anything. I hope you are convinced now that I have understood your little game, and may be it suited me very well for my own purposes.

Rivers.—Wouldn't you explain to me?

Ellen.—No; what for? You must excuse me that I have to leave you.

Rivers.—Leave me?

Ellen.—Yes; I have forgotten the pattern for my needlework, which I want to get (*exit, laughingly, into the house*).

Rivers (*trying to follow her, steps out of the arbour*).—Can't I go for it?

Pauline (*steps out from behind the marble figure and stops RIVERS—in an excited tone*).—No, sir; you cannot! You really play your part to perfection, Mr-Rivers, and one is led to the belief that it is nature itself.

Rivers (*perplexed*).—Pauline!

Pauline.—Yes, Pauline, you traitor! It isn't five minutes since I left you, and I find you in an intimate conversation with Miss Ellen already.

Rivers.—By mere chance, I assure you.

Pauline.—Oh, I know that! These chances always come when they are most wished for.

Rivers.—But Miss Ellen came to me; I didn't seek an interview with her.

Pauline.—So much the worse; your intimacy must have grown pretty strong if (*haughtily*) that Miss Ellen thinks it prudent to look for you.

Rivers.—But, how can you believe—

Pauline.—I believe only what I see—that's the point where the belief ends and the fact commences.

Rivers (*growing cold*).—And yet, you are mistaken.

Pauline.—Mistaken, eh? Did you speak a word to me at the dinner table?

Rivers (*always in a very cold tone*).—No.

Pauline.—Didn't you always talk with that woman?

Rivers.—Yes.

Pauline.—Didn't you always exchange looks with her?

Rivers.—No.

Pauline.—No! Do you mean to tell me that you didn't look at her?

Rivers.—Look at her!—yes; but that isn't exchanging looks.

Pauline.—Now, don't try to avoid my questions. Did you look at me once only?

Rivers.—Oh, yes, and very often, too!

Pauline.—That's not so.

Rivers.—It is so; but, as you always avoided to look at me, you may not have noticed it.

Pauline.—Oh, you are a faithless traitor! You put ideas in that girl's head which you can never realize, as often as I turn my back; you—

Rivers (*interrupting her, in a very serious tone*).—Miss Pauline, this will do. I'm sick and tired of your groundless suspicions! I shall leave you, and will not return until you have found out how deeply you have wronged me (*turns to go*).

Pauline.—So you go without vindicating yourself?

Rivers.—I leave my justification to your common sense and to your heart.

Pauline (*yielding*).—Charley!

Rivers.—Your common sense must tell you that my position in this house is not the most enviable; your heart ought to have prevented you from making it the more so by your jealousy. The love I feel for you I have to feign for

another. with the purpose of deceiving your father and to avoid collision with his haughty prejudice. I am not enough of an actor to play my part so well as not to arouse suspicion.

Pauline (*still more yielding*).—Rivers!

Rivers.—And if you really love me, you ought to have understood my position, and your heart should have been my defender; but your otherwise good and faithful heart succumbs to the paroxysms of the most frightful but groundless jealousy.

Pauline (*putting her hand on his shoulder*).—Charley, I forgive you.

(RIVERS looks at her silently in astonishment for a moment, and then bursts out laughing.)

Pauline.—You laugh?

Rivers (*still laughing*).—You forgive me? well, that's the best thing I heard for a long time.

Pauline.—But, how?—you can't expect me to ask your forgiveness.

Rivers.—Indeed! (*Kissing her hand*.) Well, never mind! don't let us begin to quarrel again. Have you come to your senses now?

Pauline.—What an expression that is! Don't you understand that my jealousy proves my love?

Rivers. A nice love that, I declare, which does its best to torment other people. But, as I told you before, I cannot endure this situation and hypocrisy of mine much longer; I must have an understanding about the future, and for that reason must have a private interview with you, in which we can consider our future plans calmly and quietly, without being in fear that somebody might see and betray us.

Pauline.—A private interview? Charley, how can you demand such a thing of me!

Rivers.—Why? That isn't something so very strange! Loving people have had private interviews as long as the world stands.

Pauline.—Is that really so?

Rivers.—Certainly! If I only knew a place where to meet!

Pauline.—This garden would do first rate I think. Pa and uncle Abe go to the club to-night, so there is nobody to disturb us, the more so as the garden is locked every night at eight o'clock.—I can get into the garden through uncle Abe's room.

Rivers.—Splendid—and I?

Pauline.—You come to the gate in that fence yonder which leads into the alley way.—I can open it from the inside and let you in.

Rivers.—Charming, charming! Au revoir then till to night at 8 o'clock.—We will then consider what course we have to pursue so as to secure the consent of your father to our marriage.

(Exit R.)

Pauline.—He is a good fellow anyhow, and I know that I wrong him very much with my jealousy, but still I cannot suppress it entirely.—(*looking R.*) Ah, there comes Pa, he meets Charley—they speak and walk together.—That seems strange. Let me try and find out what is the matter. (Exit R.)

SIXTH SCENE.

Enter WILLIAM, (from L. having an orange in his hand.)—If I could only find Miss Ellen! I have been hunting all our garden for her already, to give her this orange, but I can't find her. She said at dinnertable that she was going out here to do some needle work. May be she sits in the arbour. Let us look.—*(goes to the arbour.)* No, not here either! *(Notices the pocketbook, (note book) containing letters, cards, etc., which Rivers left on the table.)* Halloh, what's that! A pocketbook? Let us see! cards, letters, Charles Rivers, Esq.,—aha, that's Rivers' pocket-book! none of my business!—*(about to shut the book.)* Ah, what's that? Some poetry? Let us read it! *(reads the paper through quick.)* Splendid, splendid!—By Jove, what an idea strikes me, I'm sure he has made that for Miss Ellen. Certainly, there it is: To—and some dots! These dots mean Ellen.—Oh you rascal! *(about to tear the paper.)* Hold on—I'll get square on him. If I give this poetry to Miss Ellen, she thinks I've made it for her, it will serve my purpose and he is outwitted! *(Puts the pocketbook on a chair and wraps the paper around the orange.)* So, as soon as I see her, I'll try to give her this orange, she will read the verses, and—*(looking R.)* Halloh, there comes Pauline! I guess I'll better skedaddle so as she doesn't get hold of me.
(Exit L)

SEVENTH SCENE.

Enter PAULINE, from R.

Pa and Rivers are turning this way again. It was impossible for me to hear a word of their conversation, as I must find out what they are talking about, I'll but sit down in this arbour, may be there is a chance for me here to listen.—*(sits down in the arbour and looks at the needlework which Ellen left on the table.)* Ellen's needlework! She's a good hand at it, that's true.

EIGHTH SCENE.

Enter ELLEN, from the house. She puts a letter in her pocket while coming out of the door, and holds the pattern of her needlework in her hand. Coming forward. looks around, as if searching for somebody.

Pauline (during the entrance of ELLEN, and not noticing her.)—But for whom does she work that? It must be for a man, as no woman wears suspenders. Who can that be? I don't know of anybody with whom she is so well acquainted.—Ha, what a thought! If it is for Charley! Does he betray me in spite of his assertion of the contrary? *(notices ELLEN)* Ah, there she is!

Ellen (stops in the middle of the stage, not noticing PAULINE.)—If I only knew wheré uncle Abe is. He promised to post my letter to Frederic right after dinner, so that it reaches him in time yet.

NINTH SCENE.

PAULINE. ELLEN. *Enter WILLIAM, from L., who sneaks behind the marble figure.*

Pauline.—As often as I see her, my suspicion grows.

Ellen (*looking at the pattern in her hand*).—I'm sure this pattern will please Fred ; he is fond of flowers and leaves.

WILLIAM (*throws the orange wrapt in the paper which he took from RIVERS' pocketbook, to the feet of ELLEN. ELLEN looks around to see where that comes from. WILLIAM shows himself to ELLEN from behind the marble figure, puts his finger to his mouth, as if to ask her to be silent, and then exits L.*

Pauline (*aside*).—What's all that ?

Ellen (*picking up the orange, with the paper.*).—I'm sure that's a new nonsense of this fearful boy !

Pauline (*aside*)—What secrets can Billy have with her ?

Ellen (*reading the paper*).—Verses ?

Pauline (*aside*).—A letter ? I must know what that is ! (*coming forward*) Something very interesting, I suppose, Miss Ellen ?

Ellen (*frightened, tries to hide the paper*).—Oh, how you frightened me ! I thought there was nobody in that arbour.

Pauline (*in a malicious tone*).—I can imagine that it is very disagreeable to be disturbed when a person would rather like to be alone.

Ellen (*regaining her composure*).—Did you find me one of those persons that likes solitude so very much ?

Pauline.—Not always ; but still there are moments when a person prefers solitude.

Ellen.—Most certainly !

Pauline.—Especially if that person has to read secret letters.

Ellen.—Oh, that's what you are driving at ! You have seen what has happened before. A mere writing—exercise of your brother, I guess ; at least, I hope that's all, because if he had also made the verses it would show that he has very little poetical talent. They are really very poor.

Pauline (*inquisitively*).—Verses ?

Ellen (*unconcernedly*)—Yes ; read them yourself.

Pauline (*takes the paper, and recognizes the handwriting*).—Oh, how infamous.

Ellen (*frightened*).—What is the matter !

Pauline.—You are unmasked, you hypocrite ! Oh, you understand masterly how to feign virtue and modesty, but I have also learned to understand your tricks !

Ellen (*perplexed, but regaining her composure by degrees*).—Miss Pauline, I don't comprehend what you mean.

Pauline.—Do you deny that you know this handwriting ?

Ellen.—Not at all. As far as I know, it's your brother's,

Pauline.—My brother's ? Nonsense ! Oh, I know this hand too well, and wish to God that I had never seen it !

Ellen.—What do you mean ?

Pauline.—That I am betrayed ! But you may rest assured I shall have my revenge !—But no, my revenge shall be that I despise you and him !

Ellen.—Could you believe that your brother, a mere child—

Pauline.—Yes, a mere child yet ; consequently it was so much easier to mislead him.

Ellen (*enraged*).—Miss Pauline, this accusation—

Pauline.—What does a boy of his age know how wrong it is to act as agent or interposer in such a case?

Ellen.—Agent! interposer! I assure you that I really don't know what you mean.

Pauline.—You will perceive that, after what has happened, it will be most advisable for you to leave this house of your own accord.

Ellen.—Oh, my God!

Pauline.—If you wish to avoid an eclât; as in such a case I would surely ask my father to let me leave the house.

Ellen (*emphatically*).—You may rest assured that I shall act in accordance with what my honor prompts me to do.

Pauline (*scornfully*).—Well said; very well, indeed! nearly as good as these verses. Ah, there comes Mr. Rivers with my father! Please, gentlemen, come and listen to this beautiful piece of poetry.

TENTH SCENE.

ELLEN. PAULINE *Enter MR. CHASE and RIVERS, from R.*

Rivers.—Verses?

Mr. Chase.—Which you may keep for yourself!

Pauline.—No, no, you must hear them—they are worthy of a great poet! (*Reads, very much excited, and with scorn.*)

Do I really dare to hope
And believe thy eyes, which say
That thy love belongs to me?

Rivers.—What is that? (*Searches in his pocket for his notebook.*)

Pauline (*sneeringly, to Rivers*).—Certainly, sir, you may hope. (*Goes on reading.*)

Has thy false heart understood
To betray me in those days
When I vowed to love but thee?

Rivers.—How did you get that?

Pauline (*in the same tone*).—It did not betray you, sir; your love is reciprocated.

Ellen (*aside*).—Ah, now I understand! it's Mr. Rivers who wrote that.

Mr. Chase.—You'd better stop reading that nonsense.

Pauline.—No, no; you must hear the end of it. (*Goes on reading, still more excited.*)

No; in your pure features are
Truth! yes, truth alone expressed,
And your love belongs to me.

(*Speaks*).—Decidedly, decidedly, sir! (*Reads*.)

While I, as my throbbing heart
Sets all jealous doubts at rest,
Vow again to love but thee.

(*Speaks*).—Beautiful! most beautiful, indeed!

Mr. Chase.—Those verses are fearful, my dear!

Pauline.—Don't be so harsh in your judgment, pa, as the author stands next to you.

Mr. Chase.—Who? Mr. Rivers! so you are also a poet?

Rivers (*embarrassed*).—I think Miss Pauline acts very wrong to put me in such an awkward position.

Mr. Chase (*incredulously*).—Business man and poet in one person?

Pauline.—Why not, pa, as such an amiable object as the one in question can even turn the most prosaic person into a poet?

Mr. Chase.—What amiable object?

Pauline.—Nobody else but Miss Ellen; it is her who has called forth this poetical effusion.

Mr. Chase (*in a jealous tone*).—Miss Ellen! I'll not hope that—

Rivers (*to Mr. Chase*).—If you'll permit, I'll explain the whole matter in a few words.

Pauline.—What for, as the fact is indisputable? Miss Ellen received those verses in a very ingenious way.

Rivers.—Not from me, though?

Pauline.—But through your *postillon d'amour*.

Mr. Chase.—Through a *postillon d'amour*? that makes things worse yet.

Pauline.—Yes, dear father, Billy was the only one that undertook to play that part.

Mr. Chase.—Billy! Mr. Rivers, what shall I think of you?

Rivers (*impatiently*).—If you would only listen quietly to me for a few moments, I'm sure that I can explain the whole matter.

Pauline.—A nice explanation that must be!

Mr. Chase.—But I must have it.

Rivers (*to Ellen*).—Miss Ellen, I'm very sorry that you have been implicated in this affair, but one word from you could solve the whole mystery.

Ellen (*proudly*).—Against reproaches and accusations of that sort which Miss Pauline has heaped on me my honor demands silence, if I don't want to lose my self-respect.

Mr. Chase (*to PAULINE*).—So you accuse Miss Ellen also?

Pauline.—Yes, father. These verses, made and written by Mr. Rivers, were delivered to Miss Ellen by Billy as *postillon d'amour*, and I think that the honor of our house demands—

Rivers (*interrupting her*).—I beg your pardon, Miss Pauline ; but to have violated the honor of your house, is a reproach which I cannot allow to rest on me. I hereby declare on *my* word of honor that these verses were not sent to Miss Ellen by me, nor were even intended for her. I had them in my notebook, which I must accidentally have left in this arbor before, from which some indiscreet person must have taken and misused them in this foolish manner.

Pauline (*looking around*).—I don't see any notebook.

Mr. Chase.—Nor I either.

Rivers.—And still this is the very simple solution of this secret.

Mr. Chase.—But if these verses were not intended for Miss Ellen, to whom were they addressed then ?

Ellen (*aside, and whispering to PAULINE*).—Most surely to you !

Pauline (*frightened*).—How ?

Rivers.—That, Mr. Chase, is my secret.

Mr. Chase.—You are embarrassed, Mr. Rivers. You have secrets which you don't want to reveal, and in which members of my family are implicated ; consequently I am at leisure to believe my own version about them.

Pauline (*why begins to comprehend*).—But, dear father, perhaps—

Mr. Chase.—Never mind, my dear ; whatever the circumstances of the case are, I anyhow consider them too delicate as to be ventilated in the presence of those concerned in it.

Rivers.—You are right, Mr. Chase. I understand your hint, and will take my leave until this disagreeable misunderstanding has been cleared up either through an accident or through the good will of my accuser. I have the honor. (*Exit through the gate.*)

Mr. Chase.—Good day, Mr. Rivers. I'm sorry, Pauline, that you have instigated this disagreeable affair, which it is my duty now to investigate. Go and tell Billy to come here, as I want to find out what he knows about it, and tell him to bring my hat and cane, as I have to go out afterwards.

Ellen.—If you will permit, I'll go—

Mr. Chase.—No, you better let Pauline attend to it, as I have to speak with you also.

Pauline.—All right, Pa. (*Exit into the house.*)

Mr. Chase.—Now tell me candidly, Miss Ellen, what do you know of the affair ?

Ellen.—It's a conundrum for me.

Mr. Chase.—So you did not receive the verses from Mr. Rivers ?

Ellen.—No, sir.

Mr. Chase.—And have no connections with him whatever ?

Ellen.—Mr. Chase!

Mr. Chase.—So much the better! But it always seemed to me that he has shown you a great many courtesies.

Ellen.—Which I took for nothing else but mere civility, as generally shown towards ladies by all young men.

Mr. Chase (*amorously*).—You didn't, eh? Oh, I'm very glad of that, very glad, indeed! You see—I am a man still in his best years.

Ellen.—Indeed, you are very vigorous and healthy for a man of your age. May the Almighty preserve you long yet!

Mr. Chase.—Do you really wish that?

Ellen.—I, most assuredly, not less heartily than your entire family.

Mr. Chase (*embarrassed what to say and to do*).—Ah—ah—you are a good girl, a good girl; and if you—h'm—I suppose, don't quite understand what I mean?

Ellen.—I really don't know, Mr. Chase.

Mr. Chase.—Yes, yes; ah, there comes uncle Abe; he can explain matters to you.

ELEVENTH SCENE.

ELLEN. MR. CHASE. *Enter UNCLE ABE, from the house, bringing hat and cane of MR. CHASE.*

Uncle Abe.—Billy is not to be found; he must be somewhere around the garden, consequently I bring your hat and cane, as I was coming out anyhow.

Mr. Chase.—Thanks, uncle Abe, thanks. (*Drawing him aside.*) Now is your time to fulfil my mission to Miss Ellen.

Uncle Abe.—Now?

Mr. Chase.—Yes, now. I have to go out for a short time, and expect you to tell me her answer when I come back.—(*To Ellen.*) Uncle Abe will tell you something of importance, my dear; please to listen to him attentively, consider the matter, and give him a candid and upright answer. (*Exit through gate.*)

Ellen.—What does all that mean, uncle Abe? Mr. Chase has kind of frightened me by what he said.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—Don't get alarmed, my dear Ellen; there is no need for it.

Ellen.—But explain to me.

Uncle Abe (*aside*).—Shall I tell her everything?—Shall I give her his letter?—No, that would only embarrass and alarm her. It's better not to tell her anything of his foolishness.

Ellen.—You reflect—talk with yourself—tell me what has happened, and by that relieve me of my anxiety.

Uncle Abe (*not knowing what to say*).—Well—Mr. Chase is—what shall I say?

Ellen.—You stop—Go on, tell me! Mr. Chase is—?

Uncle Abe.—A little jealous.

Ellen (*frightened*).—Jealous?

Uncle Abe.—Yes; don't get alarmed about it, though. He likes you, and desires you to stay in our house for good, but fears that Mr. Rivers has cast his eye on you and may carry you off.

Ellen.—Mr. Rivers?

Uncle Abe.—Yes; on account of that Mr. Chase is a little, what I called jealous before.

Ellen.—Oh, to stay in his house forever is only my most fervent desire; but I think his meaning of that is different to mine and Frederic's.

Uncle Abe.—To which he has to accede, though, by and by. All we want is a little patience.

Ellen.—And on account of Rivers he needn't to fear anything.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—Oh, I know, I know.

Ellen.—You know?

Uncle Abe (*aside—slapping his mouth*).—Betrayed again—(*loud*) That is—I mean—

Ellen (*laughingly*).—Oh, no; don't you try to get out again! You have betrayed yourself! You know—

Uncle Abe.—What do I know?

Ellen.—That Pauline loves Rivers!

Uncle Abe (*closing his mouth with his hand*).—P'st, P'st! Who told you that

Ellen.—You forget that I am a woman.

Uncle Abe (*simply*).—Strange! I didn't notice anything between Rivers and Pauline.

Ellen.—If Pauline would only have confidence in me—

Uncle Abe.—Of course she would have that if she knew that you are her sister-in-law.

Ellen (*hasty*).—No, she musn't get acquainted with that fact; that is a secret which is too important.

Uncle Abe.—Well, then we must wait until everything is cleared up by itself in course of time.

Ellen.—That's my opinion also, at least I wouldn't do a single step without the knowledge and consent of my husband. I tried to find you before already, to tell you that on account of what has happened in this house to-day, I must see and speak to my husband as soon as possible. I have written him a letter to that effect and would ask you to be so kind and post it for me immediately. The mat leaves at three, he can have the letter at six and can easily be here by eight o'clock. The reason why I trouble you to post this letter for me is that I am afraid to send a servant with it, as he might read the address and betray everything. Then I would beg you also to write the address on the letter, as my handwriting on it would also be very dangerous. (*Gives him the letter.*)

Uncle Abe.—All right, my dear; give me the letter and rest assured that I will attend to it properly. (*Raising her head by her chin.*) Cheer up, everything will be all right yet.

TWELFTH SCENE.

ELLEN, UNCLE ABE. *Enter PAULINE from the house.*

Pauline (*seeing UNCLE ABE hold ELLEN by the chin, sharp*).—Ah, Uncle Abe are you trying to find out if Miss Ellen has toothache? It is strange that lady seems to have a magic power over young as well as old hearts.

Uncle Abe.—I wish you wouldn't talk as frivolous as that, Pauline.

Ellen (*in a friendly tone*).—And above all have a little confidence in me. Confidence dissolves misunderstandings, which have been brought about by groundless suspicion, the easiest. (*Exit into the house.*)

Pauline (*looking after her*).—Nothing but phrases, that's all.

Uncle Abe.—Are you not ashamed of your behavior towards that poor child?

Pauline (*mockingly*).—Poor child! It seems to me as if you are bewitched by her also.

Uncle Abe.—If you knew—(*slaps his mouth.*)

Pauline.—What?

Uncle Abe.—Nothing.

Pauline.—Although you are so mysteriously and talk as if you knew more, I believe what I have seen with my own eyes.

Uncle Abe.—Yes, but with spectacles of jealousy and suspicion on them. Why did you begin the quarrel with Rivers again?

Pauline.—On account of those verses. I may look at the thing as I please, it is and will be a fact that he made those verses for Ellen.

Uncle Abe.—He didn't dream of it.

Pauline.—How do you know?

Uncle Abe.—Because Ellen doesn't think of Rivers.

Pauline (*gladly*).—Is that true? Oh, dear Uncle Abe, tell me, please tell me.

Uncle Abe.—What shall I tell you?

Pauline.—Of whom Ellen thinks; because, if it isn't Rivers, it must surely be somebody else, and if I am positive who it is, I am happy, I am content. You know about the whole thing, as you have just now betrayed yourself; so please confess and relieve me of my fearful doubts.

Uncle Abe.—What! I betrayed myself?

Pauline.—Certainly, by telling me so decidedly that Ellen doesn't think of Rivers. Now, everybody with five senses can see that there is something important behind that assertion, and that you know about it.

Uncle Abe.—How shrewd these girls are! One foresees the secrets of the other.

Pauline.—The secrets of the other? So Ellen—

Uncle Abe.—Has found out long ago what is the matter with you and Rivers.

Pauline.—And didn't mention a word to me about it.

Uncle Abe.—How could she? Just think how you treated her! Haughty, uncivil, overbearing! Oh your behavior was very wrong, considering that you are a young girl and she a married woman!

Pauline (*catching hold of his arm in astonishment*).—What, Ellen a married woman? Ellen married?

Uncle Abe (*angry about himself*).—Nonsense! Who said so?

Pauline.—Now, look here, Uncle Abe. It's no use of you to try and back out. You have betrayed yourself again, and now I insist upon knowing your entire secrets.

Uncle Abe.—Wouldn't you be quiet, please?

Pauline.—No; I must know everything.

Uncle Abe.—Well, then—but don't scream like that—Ellen is (no, I should say, was) married—she is a widow!

Pauline.—A widow!

Uncle Abe.—At least, a grass-widow. She is a poor, pitiable woman! Her husband left her—nobody knows where he is—and she was forced to look out for her support herself.

Pauline.—Poor creature! and I have wronged her so deeply! but I will try and reciprocate everything, and will be a true friend to her in the future. Rivers has also been wronged by me—how glad I am of that! (*Sees Rivers' notebook laying on the chair in the arbor.*) And there is his notebook on the chair—so he spoke the truth? (*Takes the book.*) Now, everything is clear to me—William, that little rascal, has found it, and created the entire misunderstanding by his frivolity. Oh, how glad I am that everything is cleared up satisfactorily!

Uncle Abe.—What a curious creature a woman is! rain and sunshine, storm and spring weather, in one moment.

Pauline.—And now, uncle Abe, you must do me a favor.

Uncle Abe.—What is it, my dear?

Pauline.—I had arranged an interview with Rivers for to-night—

Uncle Abe (*reproachfully*).—An interview! Oh!

Pauline.—Don't scold, dear uncle Abe. As long as the world stands, loving people have had secret interviews.

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—Really? and where is it to take place?

Pauline.—Never mind that—I can keep my secrets better than you. Rivers went away in very bad humor, though, and I'm afraid that he'll not come; so I've made up my mind to write to him that everything has been cleared up satisfactorily, and that I expect him to-night as agreed. Will you please post the letter for me?

Uncle Abe.—What can I do but consent to be your *postillon d'amour*?

Pauline.—Thanks, a thousand thanks! I will have it ready for you in a few moments. (*Exit into the house.*)

Uncle Abe.—But now I have to take care of my tongue, and not betray myself any more. I'm afraid, though, that one-half of my secrets have leaked out already.

THIRTEENTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE. *Enter JOHN from the house.*

John.—Uncle Abe!

Uncle Abe.—Well, what's the matter?

John.—A gentleman has just come who wants to see you on a very important matter; he says he is in a great hurry, and wants to see you immediately.

Uncle Abe.—Aha, that's Mr. Boyd! I'm coming, I'm coming. (*Exit with John, into the house.*)

FOURTEENTH SCENE.

Enter RIVERS through the gate in the wall, looking around cautiously.

Rivers.—I hope nobody is in the garden, as I wouldn't like to be seen here for anything. All I want is my notebook; it would be very awkward for me if it fell into other hands, as it contains letters which I don't want to be read by anybody. (*Goes to the arbor, and searches it.*) Not here! what has become of it? No doubt somebody found it, and played me that nasty trick with those verses—at least that's the only way in which Pauline's jealousy and impetuosity is explicable, and excuses her behavior. If I could only speak to her! I cannot possibly go there, as by that I would lose all respect in her eyes. Oh, it's a fearful position in which I am! Our interview is also spoiled by the affair, as she most certainly will not expect me to come and, consequently, will not come herself. Halloo! isn't that her voice? she is coming here with uncle Abe. I'll hide myself in that arbor, because, if she sees me, she might believe that— (*Retires in the background of the arbor.*)

FIFTEENTH SCENE.

RIVERS. *Enter UNCLE ABE and PAULINE from the house.*

Pauline (*stopping in the door*).—So I rely on you, uncle Abe; if you attend to the letter properly, I'll make you a nice present on your birthday.

Uncle Abe (*with hat and cane, as if ready to go out, and two letters in his hand*).—All right, you little romp; you can rely on me. (*Crosses the stage towards the gate, at the same time putting the two letters in his pocket*)? Mr. Boyd was in a great hurry, and has gone right to Boston; it must be a pretty important piece of business, anyhow—the cotton affair. If I only knew where to find Mr. Chase now! Well, I'll try his office, and see if he is there, and at the same time post the other letters. (*About to exit.*)

Rivers.—P'st, p'st!

Uncle Abe.—Eh! Did somebody call me?

Rivers (*stepping from the arbor*).—Yes, it's I.

Uncle Abe.—Ah, Mr. Rivers! (*laughingly*) I'm glad to meet you, as I can give you the letter yourself now, which I was going to send you by mail (*hunts for the letter in his pocket*). Pauline has found out that she has wronged you,

and has written you this letter for fear that you might not come to the rendezvous to-night as arranged. Here is the letter (*hands him the letter*).

Rivers (*excitedly taking the letter*).—Thanks, many thanks, dear uncle Abe. You have brought me glorious news. (*Opens the letter hastily.*)

Uncle Abe (*good-humoredly*).—Well, I declare, you are as much excited as if you got a despatch that gold went up or down about fifty per cent., at a jump. Curious people those are which are in love.

Rivers (*aside*).—What's that? (*reading*) Have arranged to buy the cotton of Jones & Co., in Baltimore, at twelve cents a pound, if you telegraph there that you want it. Within a fortnight it will be surely up to eighteen. Have you right on to Boston. (*Speaks*) No signature? (*looks at the envelope*) No address? This is a mistake. The letter is not intended for me. But for whom?—Pshaw, never mind; that piece of news is worth gold to me (*puts the letter in his pocket. Embraces UNCLE ABE*). Dear uncle Abe, you have brought golden news to me. Tell Pauline to expect me for sure. I will come positively, and perhaps be able to tell her something which will make both of us happy. (*Exit, hurriedly, through gate.*)

Uncle Abe (*laughingly*).—He behaves like a madman. Generally Rivers is a pretty sensible and quiet man, and now he seems to loose his senses about an interview with his beloved. It is true, that such young people are not to be blamed for their pranks, if old fools like Mr. Chase and myself can't keep their heads level. Ellen has charmed all of us, even me, and I think that I could—Pshaw, what an idea, to stand here and talk such nonsense while I have more important things to attend to! I'll go now and bring Mr. Chase the cotton-news. (*About to exit.*)

SIXTEENTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE. *Enter MR. CHASE, through gate.*

Mr. Chase.—Well, uncle Abe, have you got good news for me?

Uncle Abe.—Yes, sir; here it is (*gives him a letter*).

Mr. Chase (*opens the letter, reads aside*).—To-night—in uncle Abe's room—yours, in hurry—Ellen—(*embracing UNCLE ABE*) Uncle Abe, you have worked my cause charmingly. If everything goes right I'll make you a present of a fine ivory chess-board. (*Exit, into the house.*)

Uncle Abe (*chuckling*).—Must be good news about the cotton, that, to excite that stern man in such a manner. Well, an ivory chess-board would please me very much, I declare. That's the way people are. I enjoy a game of chess, he (*pointing to the gate where RIVERS left*) gets out of his senses for joy about a love-letter, and he (*pointing towards the house after MR. CHASE*) gets in raptures about a cotton news which may bring him a big pile of money. A queer world this is indeed! And now, I'll go and post Ellen's letter to Fred.—But hold on, she told me to write the address on it myself, which I forgot. Well, I can do that at the post-office (*takes two letters from his pocket and looks at them in astonishment*). By Jove, there are two letters yet! One is Ellen's letter to Fred, and the other, Mr. Chase's to Ellen, which I didn't give to her. But that one

is without an address also. Quite right, such letters must never be addressed, as they might come into wrong hands. The question now is, which is which? Hold on, the envelopes are of very thin paper, and I guess I can look through them (*holds them up against the light*). Confound it, no; all I can see is that this one is long, and the other short. The one for Fred must be the long one, as a young wife that hasn't seen her husband for four days has got a great deal to write to him. Consequently, I'll send this long one, it's surely the right one. Wouldn't that be a mess and confusion if I should accidentally exchange the letters, and the wrong one would come into the wrong hands? Ha, ha! what a row that would be. I'll take good care though that nothing of the kind will happen.

(Exit, chuckling.)

Curtain drops.



THIRD ACT.

A plain room.—Two doors in background with curtains which are opened.—Through the doors L a bedroom is seen, while the door R shows a closet full of clothing —The door which is used as general entrance is on the right side of the stage, also door L, which is closed.—Window R draped by heavy dark curtains, which are open.—R and L tables with very large tablecloths. — L a sofa. — Time between dusk and dark.

FIRST SCENE.

Enter RIVERS and PAULINE.

Pauline.—Come in here : here we are safe. O, how I am frightened !

Rivers.—Quiet yourself, please.

Pauline.—Did you recognize him also ?

Rivers.—Yes, it was your brother Billy. I saw him quite plain, as he stood on the garden wall, looking cautiously around, and then jump into the garden.

Pauline.—I wonder what his object was ! If he had seen us, we would have surely been betrayed, as he can't keep his tongue. Luckily, however, this door (*pointing to door R*) of Uncle Abe's room, leading into the garden, was open. Here we can quietly and undisturbed chat for a quarter of an hour. Uncle Abe is gone to the club to play a game of chess and will surely not be home before nine o'clock. And even if he returns, he must come through the house and this door (*pointing to door L*), when we will have plenty of time to escape through the other one (*R*) into the garden.

Rivers.—Are you convinced now, my dear Pauline, that you have wronged me ?

Pauline.—Ps't, don't let us talk of that ! I will *believe* that you are innocent.

Rivers (*provoked*).—Only believe ! and you are not convinced ?

Pauline.—I don't trust any man, and, consequently, it is very hard to convince me on such a subject as the one in question.

Rivers (*in a loud tone*).—So you mean to say that you are *not* convinced ?

Pauline.—P'st, don't talk so loud as that.

Rivers.—There is surely nobody around here that can hear us ?

Pauline.—But I'm always in a fright that somebody saw us in the garden. Oh, how foolish it was of me to grant you this interview !

Rivers.—Tell me, have you no confidence in me ? are you not convinced of my innocence yet ?

Pauline.—I think it is rather queer of you to force me into a verbal repetition of the acknowledgement of my guilt, as I have written it to you already.

Rivers.—Written to me?

Pauline.—In my letter of to-day.

Rivers.—Which letter?

Pauline.—The one I sent you this afternoon; didn't you receive it?

Rivers.—No.

Pauline.—But I invited you once more to our interview in it.

Rivers.—I didn't receive any letter. Uncle Abe told me verbally that you had admitted to have wronged me, and expected me for sure to-night.

Pauline.—Uncle Abe told you that, and didn't give you my letter?

Rivers.—He had a letter from you for me? Oh, now I comprehend everything!

Pauline.—What?

Rivers.—P'st! Don't you hear something?

Pauline.—Yes—footsteps. (*Goes to window R.*)

Rivers.—Who can that be?

Pauline.—For God's sake it is Ellen! She is coming here. I would die, for shame, if she sees us.

Rivers.—What is to be done?

Pauline.—It is impossible to escape through that (*pointing to R.*) door, as we would meet her there, and this one (*pointing to L.*) is locked; all we can do is to hide ourselves. (*Goes to door L. in background, and hides behind the curtains, which she closes.*)

Rivers.—What an awkward situation we are in! (*About to follow Pauline.*)

Pauline (*looking out from behind the curtains*)—Don't come in here! what would the people say if we were found in here together?

Rivers.—But where shall I go?

Pauline.—Hide yourself under one of those tables.

Rivers (*crawls under the table R.*).—A nice hiding place, I declare!

SECOND SCENE.

Enter ELLEN.

Ellen (*coming forward*).—He didn't come yet! I hope Uncle Abe hasn't forgotten to post my letter. My position in this family is becoming almost unbearable, on account of Pauline's jealousy and the behavior of Mr. Chase towards me, which I understand but too well. If Fred hasn't got the courage to tell his father the truth I'll have to leave the house, as I really don't know what to do in case Mr. Chase should grow more importunate (*Goes to the window R.*) What a beautiful evening it is! Fred will have fine weather for his ride home to-night. What's that? somebody is out there in the garden!

It isn't Fred, though; he is taller—it's Billy! he is cutting flowers again. That frightful boy will bring himself and me into serious trouble yet by his behavior—for his sake I must also insist on an explanation. But what's the matter now? Billy seems to be alarmed!—he looks around anxiously!—is somebody else coming yet? My God, he is coming here! if he would see me it would be fearful! where can I hide myself? (*Goes to door R. in background, and hides behind the curtains, which she closes.*)

PAULINE observes, during this and the following scenes, everything which happens on the stage, by peeping out from behind the curtain, drawing her head back quickly whenever she thinks that the person on the stage looks in the direction where she is and might see her. RIVERS the same, from under the table.

THIRD SCENE.

Enter WILLIAM, with a bouquet of flowers.

William.—Oho, if you want to catch me, you have to be a little quicker!—(*goes to the window, R.*) From here I can overlook the whole garden. I didn't certainly climb over that high wall to be caught, and lose my flowers besides. If I only knew who it was that was sneaking around in the garden. It's getting too dark to recognize anybody; but I'm pretty sure it was pa, judging by his cough. But what can he want out here as late as this? And then, it seemed to me again, as if somebody was trying to open the gate in the garden wall from the outside. Anyhow, I'm glad that I'm in here, as it would have been a nice row about those flowers if pa had caught me.—Halloa, somebody comes here; let us try and find a hiding place! (*runs to the door L., in the background, where PAULINE is hid, and opens the curtains.*)

PAULINE shuts his mouth with her hand, shoves him back, and motions him to be quiet.

William (*astonished*).—Pauline! What does that mean? Those footsteps are coming nearer. Perhaps I can be witness of an adventure. Let us crawl under that table (*crawls under table, L.*)

ELLEN observes everything which happens by peeping out from behind the curtain, drawing her head back quick whenever she thinks that the person on the stage looks in the direction where she is, and might see her.

Rivers (*peeping out*).—Miserable position this. It seems to me as if there are more persons in the room than me.

William (*peeping out from under his table*).—Wasn't that a man's voice that spoke just now?

FOURTH SCENE.

Enter FREDERIC, quick.

Nobody here yet! How can I let Ellen know that I am here? The best way will be to wait till uncle Abe comes, and send him to tell her. I must see her to get an explanation about that strange letter of my father, which I received

to-day. (*Takes a letter from his pocket, and reads.*) "Dear Ellen, I have taken a great fancy to you, and am anxious to prove the esteem and veneration I feel for you, by providing for your future. Although, as you know, my principles are strictly in accordance with my position in life, I am willing to abstain from them for your sake. But as such an important step, which involves the happiness of a whole lifetime, demands due consideration, I would request you by this to grant me an interview for the purpose of exchanging our views on the subject."—(*Speaks*) It's my father's hand and signature, but the letter is addressed to me, and the address written by uncle Abe. I'm at a loss what to think about it. That letter was most decidedly intended for my wife. But how does it come that it is sent to me, by mail? and addressed to me? Perhaps it was accidentally exchanged.

(*During all this time the same by-play by ELLEN, PAULINE, RIVERS and WILLIAM. ELLEN tries to draw the attention of FREDERIC towards her, but always hides behind the curtain when she sees William.*)

Frederic (*proceeds*).—And if this letter is intended for my wife, what does it mean? Has uncle Abe betrayed our secret to my father? and is he willing to give his consent to our marriage?—it can be explained this way. Or should my father have taken such a fancy to Ellen that he intends to marry her himself? as the letter can also be interpreted that way; that's not improbable, as Ellen is a very charming woman, and the fire of old folks is sometimes very easily ignited. And why didn't my wife write to me yet? no letter in four days! All that excited me to such a degree that I came here to-night, even without a letter from my wife. I must and will have an explanation of all that has happened. If uncle Abe would only come here soon, as waiting in such a disposition of mind is like torture! and yet I'll have to wait patiently till he comes, as I don't know of any other way to notify Ellen of my presence, and dare not go into the house for fear somebody might see me. But holloa, what is that? Isn't somebody coming here? it's uncle Abe, I suppose—but, no! it's father, coughing! what is he looking for in the garden, at this time? By Jove, he's coming here! if he sees me I am lost—where can I hide myself? (*Runs to door R., where Ellen is hid, but steps back when he sees her.*)

[*ELLEN shuts his mouth with her hand and pulls him into her hiding place.*]

William.—What, he hides himself also! How are we going to get out of this?

Pauline.—The situation is getting worse every minute.

Rivers.—I wonder who that was just now; it is impossible to see or hear anything in this confounded position.

FIFTH SCENE.

Enter MR. CHASE, reading his letter good-humoredly. It is beginning to get dark.

Mr. Chase.—"To-night, in uncle Abe's room.—Yours, in a hurry,—**ELLEN**." Well, I never thought I would succeed as easily as this! Generally, girls are kind of bashful, but Ellen seems to look at the whole thing in a more sensible

light ; may be bashfulness is out of fashion, and girls are different now from what they were when I got acquainted with my deceased wife!—so much the better! as too long a courtship wouldn't have suited me at all. But that she accepts as quick as this flatters my vanity not a little, for, if she didn't like me, she surely wouldn't have come. And how smart she is—that little witch!—to select the finest place to be had for a secret interview, as this room is almost entirely separated from the other part of the house and has a separate entrance from the garden—I'm sure nobody will surprise us here, as uncle Abe quietly plays his game of chess at the club, not knowing that his *sanctum sanctorum* is made the scene of a rendezvous—what a face he would make if he would come! Ha, ha, ha! But where is Ellen?—she is not very punctual.

SIXTH SCENE.

UNCLE ABE, *outside in the garden.*

Uncle Abe (*scolding*).—A nice mess that is! somebody must have left the gate open, and the dog came in the garden. No wonder that all the flowers are spoiled!

Mr. Chase.—Halloa, there is uncle Abe! he is scolding about the dog, which I accidentally must have let into the garden. But what in the world brings him home as early as this?—that'll spoil everything. May be he only comes for something which he forgot, and will go away again soon—I'll hide myself behind those window curtains so long. (*Goes to the window, loosens the curtains, and hides behind them.*)

William (*peeping out*).—Now we are caught, all of us!

Enter UNCLE ABE, *carrying two bottles of wine under his arm.*

Uncle Abe.—Nobody here yet! I thought for sure to find Fred already, because I saw the gate in the garden wall open when I passed down the street. John must have forgotten to lock it to-night. I'm glad I came in that way instead of through the house so as to drive out that dog that was making a fearful havoc amongst our flowers. I locked it now, as Fred can get in any way with his key.—Didn't I beat old Phillips in our game of chess to-night! Ha, ha, he was nowhere, and I would have liked very much to follow up my victory by a second game if I didn't think that Fred was here already. And then I felt a little uneasy on account of having left my door unlocked for them.—It's strange that Ellen isn't here yet, either! Well, may be they will both come very soon, and in the meantime I'll take my ease a little (*puts the wine on the table under which WILLIAM is concealed, and lights the candle which is on the table*). There is some wine I brought for Fred, as he may want to refresh himself a little after his ride.—I guess I'll put on my slippers and my nightgown, and then smoke a cigar till they come.—What's that? Who closed the curtains of my bedroom, I wonder?—Nonsense! in a weather and heat like this, a person wants as much fresh air as he possibly can get. That's one of those foolish whims of the chambermaid again, I suppose. The curtains of the window and closet are closed also. What foolishness! (*goes to door L, in the background, for the purpose of opening the curtains.*)

Mr. Chase (*peeping out from behind the window-curtains*).—I hope he wouldn't stay home; that would be a nice thing! (*Draws back.*)

Pauline (*peeping out—to UNCLE ABE, in a whisper*). For God's sake keep quiet.

Uncle Abe (*astonished, looking around in amazement, and coming forward a few steps—in an undertone*).—By Jove, Pauline is in there!—How does she come there? and why shall I keep quiet? Is somebody else here yet? (*Goes on his tiptoes to door R., in background, trying to open that curtain.*)

ELLEN looks out, and motions him to keep quiet.

Uncle Abe (*coming forward*).—Pauline saw Ellen go to my room, and followed her to find out what she was about, and for that purpose hid herself in my bedroom. Ellen, noticing that, has hid herself in the closet, and now they both don't know how to get out without seeing each other.—Whom shall I help? H'm, I guess I'll sit down and drink a glass of wine, apparently unconcerned, and let them get out the best way they can. (*Goes to table L., under which WILLIAM is concealed. In sitting down, he knocks with his foot against WILLIAM, and jumps up, frightened.*) What's that? Somebody under that table also? Perhaps it's a thief, that has sneaked in here while the garden gate was open, which frightened Ellen and Pauline, and forced the girls to hide themselves.—Let us see, (*Goes over to R., and around table R., watching table L. all the time, as if to find out who is concealed under it, thereby passing the window with his back, where he knocks against MR. CHASE—jumping forward, with a light shriek to centre of stage.*) The devil, there is another one! What shall I do? (*chuckling*) Ha-ha-ha,—no—no, they are no thieves—at least, they don't want to steal anything. But what is to be done? I guess the best thing for me is to make believe that I leave the room, and then hide myself somewhere, also, until they are all out again. It's their business to find the best way out, as they found it in. (*Goes with great noise and ostentation to the door, opens and shuts it noisily, as if he went out, and then sneaks on tiptoes behind the sofa, where he hides himself also. All others peep out carefully from behind the curtains and then draw their heads back again.*)

William.—If I could only sneak away without anybody seeing me! I'll try. Perhaps father is gone, and I'll get out safe. (*Looks around carefully.*)

MR. CHASE, *peeping out from behind the curtain, sees WILLIAM.*

William (*seeing that he is detected by his father, in a dejected tone*).—Good evening, father.

Mr. Chase.—What are you doing there?

William (*embarrassed*).—I—I—it is only a joke.

Mr. Chase (*stepping out from behind the curtain*).—Come out here, sir!

WILLIAM *crawls out from under the table.*

Mr. Chase.—What does all this mean?

William.—Nothing, father.

Mr. Chase.—I thought you are in your room, studying your lessons?—but, instead of that, you were in the garden again, I suppose? Didn't I forbid you to go there in the evening?

William.—Father—I—

Mr. Chase (*severely*).—The truth, sir, if you don't want me to punish you severely! I hope that you were not about to steal flowers again, and, on account of being surprised, hid yourself in here?

William.—To be sure not, father; I was about—to—

Mr. Chase.—Well?

William.—To—oh, it was only a joke! I was about to surprise Pauline.

Mr. Chase.—Pauline! where is she?

William (*pointing to Pauline's hiding place*).—In there.

Mr. Chase.—In there! let me see; (*Goes there and opens the curtains.*)

Pauline (*steps out, very much embarrassed*).—Good evening, father.

Mr. Chase.—What does this mean? what are you doing here?

Pauline.—I—I—

Mr. Chase.—I, I! what is the reason you stammer?—that's very suspicious.

Pauline.—But nothing bad, dear father.

Mr. Chase.—And surely nothing good, either, or you wouldn't hesitate to give me an upright answer. Tell me the truth immediately, if you don't want me to believe the worst.

Pauline (*in the greatest embarrassment*).—I—I was going to watch Miss Ellen—no, Frederic!

Mr. Chase.—Miss Ellen! Frederic! where are they?

Pauline (*pointing to Ellen and Fred's hiding place*).—In there.

Mr. Chase.—Fred and Ellen?—impossible! Come out, if you are in there.

ELLEN and FREDERIC *step out from their hiding place.*

Mr. Chase.—Really, there they are! Why are you not at the cotton mill, sir?

Frederic.—Pardon, dear father!

Mr. Chase.—And you, Miss Ellen, hid in there with my son—what shall I think of you?

Pauline (*pinching WILLIAM'S arm—aside*).—Such a nasty young scamp, to betray me.

William (*aside, to PAULINE*).—Everybody tries to get out of the scrape as good as possible.

Mr. Chase.—All silent! No answer!

Frederic (*aside to PAULINE*).—You ought to be ashamed of yourself to betray me like this.

Pauline (*aside, to FRED*).—Everybody tries to get out of the scrape as good as possible.

Mr. Chase.—I see that my present inquiry is of no use.—Where is uncle Abe? He must know about all this, as without his knowledge and consent nobody could get into his room.

Pauline (*quickly*).—Yes, pa; uncle Abe can explain everything to you.

Frederic.—Uncle Abe knows all. }
 Ellen.—Uncle Abe knows best. } *Together.*

Mr. Chase.—But where is he?

William (*who saw UNCLE ABE before*).—There he is behind the sofa.

Uncle Abe (*comes out from behind the sofa, rubbing his hands in embarrassment.*)

—Good evening, children.

All, in astonishment.

Oh, uncle Abe!

Uncle Abe (*coming forward—slowly*).—Yes, here I am

Mr. Chase (*to UNCLE ABE*).—Will you explain to me, then, how—?

Frederic.—You know everything, so explain.

Ellen.—Our hope depends upon you.

Pauline.—You can draw us all out of our embarrassment.

} *Almost
together.*

Uncle Abe.—You demand pretty much of me at once.

PAULINE, FRED, WILLIAM *and* ELLEN, *together.*

Please, dear uncle Abe!

Uncle Abe.—All right, then! If you want me to explain, I must first ask you how do you all come into my room? Silence!—Well, then, I must ask one after the other.—Billy, how did you come in here?

William.—Uncle Abe, I am the youngest of all, and as old age must always have the preference, I wish you would also begin to interrogate the eldest one here first.

Uncle Abe.—All right, then. Let the oldest one speak first (*looking around embarrassed*). Mr. Chase, you are the oldest—and I don't know if—

Mr. Chase (*motioning UNCLE ABE to come to his side, and then says to him in an undertone*).—Keep quiet; don't you know that I have written to Ellen, asking her to grant me an interview for the purpose of finding out what she thought about a marriage with me; and didn't you give her the letter yourself? She answered on my letter by appointing an interview in your room to-night.

Uncle Abe (*astonished*).—Ellen?—Impossible!

Mr. Chase (*gives him a letter*).—There, read yourself.

Uncle Abe.—How does this letter come into your hands?

Mr. Chase.—Why, didn't you give it to me?

Uncle Abe.—I?—But that letter is intended for Fred.

Mr. Chase.—For Fred?—Well, then, how does Ellen come to write such letters to my son?

Uncle Abe (*embarrassed*).—Perhaps it wasn't intended for Fred, either?

Mr. Chase.—Oh, yes! it was for him, and that fact is proved by Ellen and Fred being here to-night. The letter must have been exchanged with another one, and by chance got into my hands.

Uncle Abe (*frightened*).—Exchanged! But where is the other one?

Mr. Chase.—Which other one?

Uncle Abe (*aside, not knowing what to do*).—That is a nice mess! But who has the letter Mr. Boyd brought?

Mr. Chase (*aloud*).—I don't know what I shall think of the whole affair! In what relation is Miss Ellen to my son, giving her the right to send him such letters? and what other letter is that, which you said I should have in place of this one? I want an answer to all that, Uncle Abe?

Uncle Abe (*aside*).—Now comes the catastrophe. (*Aloud*) But, if you have got this letter, Frederic must have got a wrong one also.

Frederic.—Certainly; a letter which was entirely unintelligible to me, and which was the reason that I came here to-night. (*Gives uncle Abe the letter.*)

Uncle Abe (*aside, while taking the letter from Fred*).—Thanks to God; Mr. Boyd's letter didn't get into the wrong hands, after all! (*Aloud, while opening the letter*) Here you are, Mr. Chase—the devil! what is this again?

Mr. Chase (*taking the letter, in an undertone to uncle Abe*).—That's my letter to Miss Ellen.

Uncle Abe (*bluffed*).—So it seems.

Mr. Chase.—And addressed to my son, in your handwriting? (*Returns the letter to Uncle Abe.*)

Uncle Abe (*looking at the letter, bewildered*).—Yes, yes; that's so!

Mr. Chase.—The whole affair is getting more mysterious at every minute.

Frederic.—I could give that letter only one explanation, dear father—and that was that uncle Abe had told you everything about Ellen and me, and that you wanted a private interview with Ellen for this reason: to tell her yourself that you had no prejudice against her being a girl without means, and, consequently, no objections to our marriage.

Mr. Chase.—What, against your marriage with Miss Ellen?

Uncle Abe (*having during this time read the letter of Mr. Chase, aside to Mr. Chase*).—For God's sake say yes, as that's the best way to draw yourself out of the snare. They were married secretly, long ago. Fred brought Ellen into your family, as housekeeper, for the purpose of winning your affections; she has succeeded only too well. Luckily, this letter can be interpreted in two ways. Do you want to tell them that you meant to propose your hand to Ellen by it? that you have come here on account of having thought that she consented to it? If that becomes known, you will be laughed at.

Mr. Chase.—A miserable position I am in.

Uncle Abe (*always whispering to Mr. Chase*).—If you considered Miss Ellen fit to be your wife, you can have no objections against her as your daughter-in-law, or else you stamp yourself as acting under the influence of jealousy and malice. So you had better say yes, and by that drag yourself out of the snare.

Mr. Chase.—You are right; there is nothing else left for me to do. (*Aloud to ELLEN and FREDERIC*) To be sure, did uncle Abe tell me everything; and although I should be angry—

UNCLE ABE has, during this time, gone to ELLEN and FRED, and shoved them towards MR. CHASE.

Frederic. } —Dear father, you forgive?
Ellen. }

Mr. Chase (*putting their hands together*).—With all my heart!

Frederic. } —Thanks, a thousand thanks!
Ellen. }

Mr. Chase.—Under the condition, though, that, as I will not send Fred to the cotton-mill again, you have to stay in my house as housekeeper, and must not forget to love the old father a little bit, besides your young husband.

Ellen.—Oh, you shall be content with me.

Frederic.—We will do all we can to make life pleasant for you.

Uncle Abe (*joyously*).—Settled satisfactorily at last! Ha-ha-ha!

Ellen (*to PAULINE*).—Dear sister!

Pauline.—Can you forgive my rude behavior?

ELLEN and PAULINE *embrace and kiss each other.*

Mr. Chase (*to PAULINE*).—But now you must tell me what your business was in here.

Uncle Abe.—And above all, as the letters have been exchanged, I must have the right one in my pocket yet. (*Takes a letter from his pocket*)—Indeed, there it is. Oh, how glad I am that I didn't loose it.

Mr. Chase.—What letter is that?

Uncle Abe.—The one Mr. Boyd gave me for you; that is the one I intended to give you (*in an undertone*) when I gave you Ellen's letter to Fred.

Mr. Chase.—And now I get that letter by far too late for a satisfactory arrangement of the cotton business.—But let me see, anyhow, what he writes. (*Opens the letter*).—What's that? (*Reads*) “I have wronged you; come into the garden to-night, as arranged. I hope to reconcile you. Yours, for ever, PAULINE.”

Pauline (*aside to UNCLE ABE*).—What did you do? That is my letter.

Uncle Abe (*bluffed*).—Your letter?

Mr. Chase.—What is this, Pauline? For whom is this letter intended?

Pauline.—For—

Mr. Chase.—Well?

Pauline (*bashfully*).—For Mr. Rivers.

Mr. Chase.—For Mr. Rivers? So there is another love affair behind my back, eh?—A rendezvous!—Well, I'll settle that afterwards. First, I want to know of you now, uncle Abe, where that letter from Mr. Boyd is?

Uncle Abe (*dejectedly*).—I really don't know. I'm entirely confounded.

Mr. Chase.—But don't you know that the letter was very important, and can't you recollect to whom you gave it, or where it is?

Rivers (*crawling out from under the table*).—If you please, sir, I have got it.

All, in astonishment.

Rivers?

William (*aside*).—Another one? May be there is one behind the bed yet. I'll go and look. (*Looks around in the room, then goes to ELLEN and speaks with her, as if begging her to forgive him.*)

Mr. Chase.—How do you come here, sir, explain?

Rivers.—The letter you hold in your hand, sir, and which called me here, was intended for me, but, instead of that one, uncle Abe gave me this one. I opened it, and found the news about the cotton. You will not blame me for it, that I, as a business man, made use of such an important piece of news as best as I could. I have bought the cotton of Jones & Co. in Baltimore, and, as the price is going up steadily, the sale of it at the proper time will make me a rich man, whom you will surely not refuse the hand of your daughter. But, as the letter was intended for you, which I couldn't know, because it had no address written on it, I am ready to share the profit of the business with you, if you desire.

Mr. Chase.—Uncle Abe, what did you do again!

Uncle Abe.—Give him the girl, and the profit of the cotton business will stay entirely in the family. Pauline loves him, and he has proved to be a smart business man.

Pauline.—Please, father, consent!

Rivers.—I love Pauline most fervently!

Frederic.—Don't refuse, pa, please!

} *Almost together.*

Mr. Chase.—All right, then. That cotton job was a smart piece of business of yours, and you shall have the girl as a reward for your shrewdness.

Rivers.

Pauline. } Many, many thanks, dear father!

William.—And I luckily got out of the scrape without being bruised.

Uncle Abe (*wiping his forehead*).—Two happy couples!—who would have thought of that this forenoon?

Mr. Chase.—But the whole confusion has been created by uncle Abe—

Frederic.—Because he didn't keep silent—

Pauline.—And betrayed everything and everybody.

Uncle Abe.—About which you oughtn't to growl at me, though, as everything turned out right, after all. You packed too many secrets on my poor shoulders—they were entirely too heavy for me to carry.

Mr. Chase.—But the letters! what mischief couldn't they have created?

Uncle Abe (*to the public*).—Didn't I tell you before that a fearful confusion would arise if, by chance, the letters were exchanged? I'm only glad that everything came out good at the end.

The curtain drops.



The first part of the report is devoted to a general description of the project and its objectives. It is followed by a detailed account of the methods used in the investigation.

The results of the investigation are presented in the following section. It is found that the data obtained are in good agreement with the theoretical predictions. This is particularly true for the case of the first series of experiments.

The discussion of the results shows that the observed phenomena can be explained on the basis of the theory proposed. It is concluded that the theory is valid for the conditions investigated.

The conclusions of the investigation are summarized in the final section. It is shown that the theory is in good agreement with the experimental results. This is particularly true for the case of the first series of experiments.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the members of the staff of the laboratory for their assistance during the course of the investigation.

The work described in this report was supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 12345.



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